

THE
WANT OF THE AGE ;
OR,
PHONETIC SHORTHAND.

A SUBSTITUTE FOR
ORDINARY WRITING ;

INCLUDING A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ARTS
OF WRITING AND SHORTHAND.

Reprinted from the "Phonetic Journal," Vol. 18, for 1859.

LONDON :
FRED. PITMAN, 20 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
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Isaac Pitman 1813-1897

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THE WANT OF THE AGE;
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CHAPTER 1.—WRITING.

1. *The Art of Writing*.—There was unquestionably a period, far back in the history of civilization, when communication between man and man was carried on only by *oral* language; when distant persons could communicate with one another only by messenger or pre-concerted signal; when generations living knew of the past only through the uncertain medium of tradition, and the art and mystery of *writing*, by means of alphabetical characters, was unknown to mankind.

The invention of conventional signs, characters, or letters, was the first step to that accumulated knowledge which we now find in the world. Without the means of recording and perpetuating ideas by writing, slow indeed would have been the advancement of mankind in intelligence, refinement, and general improvement.

“Writing, as multiplied by the printing press, is the light which photographs, as it were, every step of human progress, in signs remaining visible and intelligible to all future generations; preserving and extending every branch of knowledge, and daily carrying the thoughts of the wisest into regions where knowledge had never penetrated. It is a light whose rays are continually spreading, and which will continue to spread, till the whole earth is illuminated by it. Ignorance flies before the effulgence of the ideas it conveys, in vain endeavoring to take refuge in the everywhere decreasing darkness; and its constant companions, prejudice and superstition, are everywhere retreating, without the possibility of return: this miracle is being wrought by the sole agency of an art the habitual use of which disguises its giant power, and deprives it, to a superficial observer of its really deep interest and importance. Change of mighty import, is being daily wrought through the medium of the art which we simply and coolly term ‘writing,’ without staying to reflect that the examination of its origin, its earliest development, and eventual progress to completeness, open to us one of the most interesting and important fields of investigation that the story of man’s intellectual progress affords.

“The names of the first men who were fortunately able to make use of this engine in a form intelligible to future generations, and thus to embalm their highest thoughts, and record the great events of their time, and, as it were, speak to posterity, are, even now, those that stand highest in our memories of the past. Greater thoughts may have been conceived before them and after them, even by greater minds; but it is the earliest human thoughts thus rendered perennial by the sublime invention of writing that will ever occupy the first place. The words of their precursors passed away with the winds to which they were spoken; but the earliest human ideas that have reached us, wonderfully preserved by a few conventional signs—those of Homer, of Moses, of Hesiod, of Herodotus—are those which our race will ever look upon with fervent veneration. These men were the first who mastered the power (or their admirers for them) of transmitting the highest thoughts of *their* time to *our* time, through the medium of writing signs. Their thoughts, preserved in the mystic signs of a hieroglyphic or alphabetic system of writing, have reached us in all the purity and grandor of their antique simplicity, unsullied (as mere *traditions* would have been) by the long dark ages of ignorance and misrule through which they have passed; and such relics of the wisdom, of the thoughts, of the very *words* of those great elders of our race, form noble illustrations of the value of the art by means of which they have been preserved.

“What are our great modern inventions—our clocks, our railways, our electric telegraphs—to such a power as this, simple as it now appears after the accustomed use of ages? It is true the skilfully elaborated chronometer may, by measuring time with curious accuracy, lend powerful aid to the most important scientific discoveries; but without the art of writing to record them, they would be lost as fast as achieved. The railway simply annihilates space, and the electric telegraph outstrips its speed, and even conveys language to the furthest corners of the earth with the swiftness of lightning. It could be made to speak to the antipodes in a few seconds, as easily as it now speaks from London to Paris; but it can only speak with its contemporaries, it cannot speak to futurity: this high privilege is reserved for the art of *writing*, which can speak on to

“Ages yet unborn, in accents yet unknown;”

for with a true phonetic alphabet all languages may be written, and by its means a continuous chain of human thought will be extended to future races of men, when railways and telegraphs may have disappeared before appliances of science more perfect and more true;—the result of the *written* thoughts of succeeding discoveries.”

When, and how, we first began to write, in the wide meaning of the word, and by what stages the art has traveled down to the present day, we propose briefly to indicate, with the assistance of Mr.

Humphreys's recently published "History of Writing,"(1) from which the preceding eloquent passage is extracted. We propose further to extend our inquiry, How far the mode of writing we inherit answers the requirements of writers in this active generation, and how far it is consistent with scientific principles. We shall endeavor to give a practical turn to the inquiry, and to indicate the probable future adoption of some yet more suitable medium for expressing our thoughts on paper, and transacting the business of life, than is at present generally in use.

In seeking to answer the first of these inquiries, we shall have to go very far back in the history of civilization,—long before our alphabet was in existence, and before even European civilization had commenced,—alphabetic writing being but the more perfected form of primitive attempts to express and perpetuate ideas.

We shall not hesitate freely to quote from Mr. Humphreys's work, and from other sources within reach, in the sections immediately following; preferring thus to authenticate our account rather than present mere general conclusions in our own words.

2. *Antiquity of Writing*.—There can be little doubt that the art of writing grew up independently in countries having no communication with each other, when they respectively arrived at that period of civilization at which such an art became desirable,—when the necessity of reporting events to distant persons, and of placing them on record for future use, came to be felt. "Thus," observes Mr Humphreys, "both in China and in Egypt we have pretty decisive evidence that the art was independently invented; though some have attempted to assert that the Chinese received the art from the Egyptians, and others that the Egyptians received it from the Chinese, merely upon the ground of the similarity of the earliest iconographic characters of those nations." (p. 14.) They appear both to have perfectly independent claims to its invention; for there existed the whole breadth of Asia between them to prevent the probability of communication, and in those days there were no railways or electric telegraphs." (p. 22.)

"These two nations, (says the same authority,) in the present state of our paleographical knowledge, stand out from the other nations of the world in the honorable position of the earliest inventors of the glorious art of writing. The Egyptians, however, long preceded the Chinese in the use of writing, as they preceded them also in civilization. "The Chinese invention of writing appears to date from the time of Fou-Hi, 2,950 years anterior to the Christian era, or near 5,000 years before our time. Such dates make writing appear, indeed, an invention of hoar antiquity—of the 'dark dim time of eld;' yet

1. "The Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing." By Henry Noel Humphreys, 2nd edition, 1855.

in the land of Egypt, the pyramids of Memphis were constructed 2,000 years prior to the time of Fou-Hi, and their still existing hieroglyphs prove that a system of writing had even then been perfected by the Egyptians.”(2.)

“They (the Egyptians) were indisputably the first people, as far as monuments shew, who created a regular and intelligible system of recording thoughts and events; and before they arrived at the degree of perfection in the art in which we find it in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the most ancient of their existing temples, generation upon generation of their hereditary scribes must have passed their whole lives arduously laboring towards its accomplishment.” (p. 34.)

It is possible that even more primitive nations than that of Egypt may have earlier invented writing; but as Egypt alone can produce monuments of the highest antiquity exhibiting the art in its ante-alphabetic stage, to that source must the credit of the earliest invention be ascribed till other claims to priority can be established. It is, however, sufficient for our inquiry here to establish that, writing, or the art of communicating ideas by visible signs, had its rise in very remote times, and was probably among the earliest achievements to which the exigencies of society naturally and inevitably led;—that

“ With the first dawn of science on the earth,
The glorious art of writing had its birth,”

before history recorded events, or cities began to be erected.

3. *Primitive Writing*.—There is a wide difference between primitive modes of writing and the alphabetic method employed by European and other civilized nations at the present day. Men wrote first by *pictures*, and in this way—by rude drawings of the forms of objects—essayed to communicate a knowledge of events to distant persons and times. Such, in their earlier stages, was the writing of both the Egyptians and the Chinese, to which we have referred.

We have an example of this picture-writing, in later times, in the case of the Mexicans, who made known to their chief the arrival of the Spanish squadron on their coast, by rudely sketching on cloth the appearance of the invaders, their ships, horses, fire-arms, etc. It was also by means of historical pictures that the important events connected with their empire were recorded. Thus, as remarked by Professor Stuart, “three of the most distinguished nations of three different continents, namely, the Chinese in Asia, the Egyptians in Africa, and the Mexicans in America, have all hit on the like expedient to transmit their ideas to posterity.” He adds, “In all these facts too, we may see the infancy of alphabetic writing, the germ from which this tree sprung, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.”

2. Mr Humphreys adopts Hales's computation of the age of the world.

The Egyptians and the Chinese both advanced beyond mere picture-writing ; the farther development of the Mexican system being permanently checked by the introduction of the European alphabet by the Spaniards.

4. *Egyptian "Hieroglyphic" Writing.*—The Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, still wonderfully preserved to us in existing temples and monuments, consisted of three distinct orders of characters, indicating three distinct stages of progress, and forming together one general system. It was, first, pictorial, or *object*-expressing. It was, next, symbolical, or *idea*-expressing ; thus an eye was used as the symbol of *knowledge*, a lion of *strength*, a circle of *eternity*, and so on. In its third aspect it was phonetic, or *sound*-expressing,—rude outlines or fragments of pictures being used to signify sounds, more particularly for names of persons and countries, which otherwise could not have been expressed to the eye ; bringing the system thus to the very verge of a positive alphabet. “Nevertheless,” observes Mr Humphreys, “the Egyptians failed to advance beyond the point thus early achieved ; and it was left to other nations to develop the pictorial system into a purely alphabetic one ; to strip it of its pictographic adjuncts, and realize the greatest and most important of the inventions of man. But, the builders of the pyramids had done much ; they invented purely phonetic or sound-expressing signs in addition to iconographic or pictorial ones, and ‘it is strange,’ says Prescott, in his history of Mexico, speaking incidentally of the Egyptian system of writing as compared with that of the Mexicans, ‘that having thus broken down the thin partition which separated them from an alphabet, their latest monuments should exhibit no nearer approach to it than their earliest.’” (p. 34.)

Respecting these phonetic or sound-expressing signs, Mr Humphreys observes,—“The last and most important class of Egyptian characters, the phonetic ones, appear to have been formed in the following manner :—The words of the primitive Egyptian language were generally composed of a single syllable ; thus, for instance, the sun which was called RE, or RO, and expressed hieroglyphically by a circle with a dot in the centre, was by the primitive scribes associated with the sound *Re* ; and its use to that effect was the first step towards the creation of a *character* representing a *sound* : the foundation of the true art of writing. The initial sounds of other words became in their turn associated in the minds of the scribes with the characters by which the objects were represented ; and it was found that, by using several such characters in that feeling, accompanied by a determinative sign to denote their novel application, the sounds of proper names might be expressed. The new method was indeed, at first, only applied to foreign names ; but its value was eventually felt beyond that narrow sphere, and it became part of the principle of the general system of hieroglyphic writing.” (p. 44.)

These phonetic signs of the Egyptians are the earliest known approach to a true alphabet ; and, as we shall see presently, it is probably from these contracted picture-forms that our own English alphabet is remotely descended.

5. *The Chinese System of Writing*.—It is singular that while the Egyptians early approximated their writing to nearly an alphabetic representation, the Chinese, Mr Humphreys remarks, “remained in their first stage of strictly pictorial writing, merely reduced in complication of lines in order to abridge the time necessary for writing it, with the exception of certain rude approaches to the phonetic principle in a *syllabic* instead of a *literal* form. This difference,” he continues, “is highly characteristic of the two nations. The races of western Asia filled northern Africa and the whole of Europe with the seeds of a vital intelligence, and eternal progress has sprung from the germination of the seeds thus sown ; while the yellow races of the deep far East remain ever in the dawn of art ; the sun of civilization has never half risen upon them ; they invent, but their inventions are not endowed with life ; they have no motive power, no progressive spirit animating them ; and they seem destined to remain for ever in their original crudity—like an over-developed infant, cumbersome and inactive in all the more elevating branches of civilization.

“From this and other causes it is that we are still enabled to witness among a people whose knowledge of the arts of life dates back 5,000 years, the interesting spectacle of the existing practice of a system of writing yet preserving the primitive form of pictorial characters. The scriptorial signs of the Chinese are in fact nothing more than a series or combination of pictures ; so that when we say that the Chinese (written) language consists of so many thousand *letters*, we speak incorrectly, for they do not convey the idea of a sound, but only of an image. A knowledge of a very moderate number of these signs, or pictures, would enable an individual to communicate any ordinary ideas belonging to the common business of life, just as a knowledge of 500 or 600 words of the Spanish or German languages would enable a stranger to hold a conversation upon any ordinary topic, though either language might contain several thousands.” (p. 22.)

The hieroglyphic and pictorial modes, even in their most improved form, were at best only clumsy expedients for expressing ideas. Anything like an accurate description of events, with such instruments, was not practicable. In the place of detailed history, only the most meagre outlines of occurrences could be given,—very different indeed from the copious and certain information which in the present age it is our privilege to enjoy. Nevertheless it is possible that such methods may have served well enough for those first and ruder ages when stones, wood, metals, papyrus, or the skins of animals, were the surfaces on which their writing was chiefly inscribed.

6. *Alphabetic Writing*.— We come now to alphabetic writing,— that wonderful contrivance by which with a few simple letters every shade of human thought, every requirement of the mind, every aspect and achievement of human knowledge and inquiry can be accurately expressed,—“ a result, which, when rightly considered, must be deemed one of the sublimest conquests of intellectual progress, and the motive power of all future advances in the path of general civilization.” It is clearly an improvement upon mere picture or hieroglyphic writing, and of much more recent origin ; the power of representing sounds by conventional characters, being obviously the last and not the first stage in the development of Writing.

“ A little reflection ” says Mr Astle, in his work on the *Origin and Progress of Writing*, “ will discover, that men in their rude uncultivated state had neither leisure, inclination, nor inducement to cultivate the powers of the mind to a degree sufficient for the formation of an alphabet ; but when a people arrived at such a state of civilization as required them to represent the conceptions of the mind which had no corporeal forms, NECESSITY, the mother of invention, would occasion further exertions of the human faculties, and would urge such a people to find out a more expeditious manner of transacting their business, and of recording their events, than by picture-writing ; for the impossibility of conveying a variety of intellectual and metaphysical ideas, and of representing sounds, by the emblematic mode of writing, would naturally occur ; and therefore the necessity of seeking out some other that would be more comprehensive, would present itself. These exertions would take place whenever a nation began to improve in arts, manufactures, and commerce ; and the more genius such a nation had, the more improvements would be made in the notation of their language ; whilst those people who had made less progress in civilization and science, would have a less perfect system of elementary characters, or would for ages advance no further in this art than the marks or characters of the Chinese.”(3)

We may assume thus generally that letters were the produce of a certain degree of civilization among mankind ; just as railway traveling, and telegraphic communication, are the products of advanced scientific knowledge, and a desire for more rapid and extended intercourse, in our own day and country.

The Phœnicians appear to have been the first to attain to the use of actual letters.

“ Phœnicians first, if ancient fame be true,
The sacred mystery of letters knew ;
They first, by sounds, in various lines designed,
Expressed the meaning of the thinking mind ;
The power of words by figures rude expressed,
And useful science everlasting made.”

— *Lucan*.

3. “ The Origin and Progress of Writing as well Hieroglyphic as Elementary.” By Thomas Astle, F.L.S., F.S.A., London, 1803.

It is not, however, contended that the Phœnicians were the actual *inventors* of letters in the full and precise acceptance of the term ; that is, their alphabet was not specially contrived by rules of art, or framed to accord with any precise scientific principles. It was simply *derived* or *adapted* from previous attempts to record ideas, much in the same way that improvements in our own day are founded on the achievements of previous laborers in the different departments of art or science.

Writers have not been wanting who have maintained that letters originally derived their forms from the positions of the organs of speech in their pronunciation. A Mr Nelme also published a work (as Mr Astle tells us) wherein he endeavors to show that all elementary characters or letters derived their forms from the line and the circle. But we must seek for the origin of letters in some less fanciful direction ere we can arrive at any sound and satisfactory conclusion. Letters are a *growth*, not an original *invention* ; at least we may fairly assume this till something like evidence to the contrary is adduced.

“ It is possible, and probable,” says Mr Humphreys, “ that the Phœnicians formed a system of writing *based upon that of Egypt*, at the time the Phœnician shepherds ruled in the land of the Pharaohs, and even at that early period perfected an alphabetic system of writing. Tacitus, for instance, tells us that the Phœnicians learned the art of writing from the Egyptians, and carried it to all nations : and the opinion of such a man as Tacitus, so cautious in all he advances, and so accurate in the manner in which he expresses all that he states, is worthy of the highest respect. The degree of analogy discoverable between the oldest Phœnician inscriptions and the latest writing of the Egyptians in a degree bears out the assertion ; especially if it were proved that in founding a system of writing upon that of the Egyptians, they took the *phonetic* portion of the system *alone*, and entirely remodelled and simplified the characters themselves, reducing them at once to a perfect alphabetic method both as to their distinct phonetic capacity, and as to their simple and arbitrary forms ; which, if it were so, would be one of the greatest intellectual advances ever achieved, as it were, at one bound. At the same time this sudden advance is possible ; for *the true phonetic principle already existed in the Egyptian system, of which it formed the simplest, and even the largest portion*, and may thus have been found, on the transfer of the art to the use of a people speaking another language, the only one easily and completely convertible to its new purpose.” (p. 73.)

“ It appears pretty evident,” continues the same authority, “ that the Phœnicians preceded the Hebrews in the knowledge of letters ; for, located upon the coast of Asia Minor, and near neighbors of the Jews, they have left monuments of the art of writing in the peculiar character of their nation dating several centuries prior to any Hebrew remains. It is most probable, and in accordance with the remarks

of Tacitus, and the facts which have been here advanced, that in their active commercial enterprises they may have acquired the principles of the art in an imperfectly alphabetic form, either directly from the Egyptians, or through the medium of the Assyrians; and their having, in their trading voyages to other nations, communicated to them the art thus acquired, may be the cause of their receiving the credit of its first *invention*, so frequently awarded to them by many Greek and Roman writers.

“Leaving out of the question the claim of the Phœnicians to be the *originators* of the art, it appears at all events certain that they were the people through whose means the wonderful invention of writing was *disseminated* in Western Europe, and probably also in the East, where the Phœnicio-Semitic alphabet appears to have been the first to supersede the cumbrous forms of the cuneatic systems.(4) The written monuments of this interesting people mark most of the traces of their progress in the West: they went forth, as it were, to civilize Europe through the medium of writing; and as they proceeded on their adventurous course westward, we find everywhere, written monuments of their route. At Cyprus, at Athens, at Malta, in Sicily, and at Carthage, the eldest daughter of the Phœnician Tyre—also at Gades, the modern Cadiz, the first Phœnician colony in Spain—and still farther west, traces of Phœnician writing are found. In Italy, the Etruscan, the Samnite, and the Oscan inscriptions are all in a character closely allied to the pure Phœnician; and Italy has never sought to deny the source from which she derived the inestimable art without which the eloquence of Cicero would have died with the tongue that gave it utterance, and the verses of Virgil and Horace would have been but recitations, forgotten after the generation to which they were addressed, or preserved only in vague traditions, like the supposed rhapsodies of Ossian, or the rude ballads of Wales.”

Referring to the probable derivation of letters from an Egyptian source, Mr Humphreys observes:—

“I have stated that the Phœnician mode of writing, if acquired in Egypt consisted probably of a limited number of phonetic characters selected from the Egyptian scriptorial system, without reference to the pictorial origin. If this was the case they would soon lose all traces of their primitive forms and become mere arbitrary signs, modified continually till they assumed the kind of forms most readily written. By this kind of transposition of a set of characters from one language to another, we obtain a striking glimpse of the manner in which a system of arbitrary signs *grew* out of pictorial ones, and, finally, throwing off with their pictorial forms their allegiance to art, became feudatories of history and science.” (p. 75.)

Alphabetical writing, we may thus assume, arose naturally out of hieroglyphical writing, as hieroglyphics themselves were developed from simple picture-writing. The opinion that alphabetical writing

was not the invention of man, but a special gift of God, has, however, been maintained by many eminent men; but, as Dr Priestly very justly observes, “the imperfections of all alphabets (the Hebrew by no means excepted) seem to argue them *not* to have been the product of Divine skill, but the result of such a concurrence of accident and gradual improvement, as all human arts, and what we call inventions, owe their birth to. For certainly the alphabets in use bear no marks of the regularity of the works of nature. The more we consider the latter, the more reason we see to admire their beauty, just proportions, and consequent fitness to answer their respective ends; whereas, the more we examine the former, the more defects, superfluities, and imperfections of all kinds do we discover in them.” With Dr Priestly agree Bishop Warburton, Bishop Wilkins, M. Fourmont, M. Gebelin, Mr Astle, Mr Humphreys, and a host of others who have ably argued in support of the human origin of alphabetic writing, and of its gradual growth out of hieroglyphics in their more abridged forms,—a conclusion fairly deducible both from history and sound reason.

7. *Ancient Hebrew Writing*.—On the probable origin of the Hebrew alphabet, and the first use of writing among the Jews, Mr Humphreys has the following interesting remarks:—“The Hebrew language, and the character in which it was written, have a deep interest for all nations of Christendom, as being the means by which the Jewish Scriptures have been transmitted to us, upon which the Christian faith is founded.

“It appears singular that no monuments of Hebrew writing exist, which are not posterior even to the Christian era, with the exception of those on the coins of the Maccabees, which are in the ancient, or what is termed the Samaritan, form of the Hebrew letters. The recent discoveries in Assyria have, however, brought to light many inscriptions in a character closely resembling the Hebrew, which are evidently contemporaneous with the later Assyrian inscriptions of the cuneatic form. Earlier than this, however, it is not likely that any scriptorial monuments of a kind likely to elucidate the early history of the Jewish method of writing will ever be recovered, though it is certain that some kind of writing was known to that people in the time of Moses, if not before; for it is self-evident that their great leader and deliverer was skilled in all the knowledge of the Egyptians, and, of course, in the art of writing. He must also have been aware that the Egyptian system of expressing ideas by means of writing, consisted of pictorial, symbolic, and phonetic characters; and he knew that these three classes of characters were blended by the Egyptians into one homogeneous general system, as we find it in works known to have been in existence in his time, among which is the obelisk of Luxor, recently erected in Paris.

“That Moses must have introduced the art of writing among the Jewish people, if they did not possess it before, appears certain, as

in more than one passage of the Pentateuch, writing is spoken of as an art well known.

“ If he were the direct means of conferring a system of writing upon the Jewish people, he probably perceived, when a foreign language was to be expressed by Egyptian characters, the advantage of only adopting the *phonetic* signs—leaving the heavy paraphernalia of the pictorial and symbolic characters untouched. Conjectural evidence, if the term evidence may be so qualified, is, however, in favor of the view that the Phœnicians had already effected this elimination of the Egyptian system, and founded in a neighboring state, an alphabetic system ready to the hands of the Hebrew people; and that when they returned to the land of their fathers, and found themselves neighbors of the Phœnicians who spoke a nearly allied language, they adopted the alphabet of that people, with certain modifications, which may either have been effected at the time, or may have subsequently grown up; the differences being such as were likely to have ensued in a written character when practised by nations whose political and religious institutions became so distinct.

“ However this may be, the earliest known form of the Hebrew alphabet, that termed the Samaritan, bears evident traces of a common origin with that of Phœnicia. So that, whether the Jewish system of writing was a direct adaptation of portions of the Egyptian system by Moses, or by some earlier patriarch, or whether it was received through the medium of an already perfected Phœnician alphabet derived from the same source, is unimportant.

“ A striking proof of the immediate derivation of both the Phœnician and Hebrew characters from a hieroglyphic system is the original *names* of the signs which form the Hebrew alphabet, which have fortunately been preserved, and which indicate clearly their pictorial origin. Whether the Hebrew was immediately founded upon the Phœnician arrangement or not, cannot, as stated, with our present means of observation, be determined; but the great similarity of the two alphabets would naturally lead to this inference, rather than that which supposes a direct Egyptian origin. That the Jewish alphabet was rather derived immediately from Phœnicia, the civilization of which province preceded that of Judea, appears most probable; as in most of the arts of life there are evident traces of their having followed in the track of their more advanced neighbors.” (p. 79.)

“ It may be urged that the resemblance of the Hebrew characters, in their present state, to the pictures on which they are supposed to be founded, is very difficult to trace; but the disfigurement of both the Phœnician and Hebrew signs, by the extreme abridgement of their original pictorial forms, is easily conceived, when we take into consideration that they were adopted, most likely, not from the full hieroglyphic forms of the Egyptian characters, but from the already

simplified hieratic writing, or possibly the still further abbreviated demotic or enchorial.”(5) (p. 84.)

The current Hebrew alphabet differs somewhat from its ancient Phœnician form,—a change which is supposed to have taken place at the time of the Babylonish captivity.

8. *Greek and Roman Letters*.—That the alphabetic characters of the ancient Greeks were modifications of the Phœnician letters, is generally acknowledged. Herodotus, the earliest of the Greek historians, clearly alludes to the Phœnician origin of the Greek characters in the following passage, in which, speaking of that people, he says, “they brought fresh knowledge into Greece; and among other things, *letters*, which were not in use before.” He further tells us, that the Greeks much admired the art of writing as practised by the Phœnicians, and, “eventually modifying the form of their letters, employed them for writing their own language.” Pliny also mentions the tradition that Cadmus brought letters from Phœnicia to Greece,—a tradition still current at the present day.

“It is curious to observe,” says Dr Blair, in his lecture on the Rise and Progress of Language and Writing, “that the letters which we use at this day, can be traced back to this very alphabet of Cadmus. The Roman alphabet which obtains with us, and with most of the European nations is plainly formed on the Greek, with a few variations. And all learned men observe, that the Greek characters, especially according to the manner in which they are formed in the oldest inscriptions, have a remarkable conformity with the Hebrew or Samaritan characters, which it is agreed, are the same with the Phœnician, or the alphabet of Cadmus. Invert the Greek characters from left to right, according to the Phœnician and Hebrew manner of writing, and they are nearly the same. Besides the conformity of figure, the names or denominations of the letters, *alpha*, *beta*, *gamma*, etc., and the order in which the letters are arranged, in all the several alphabets, Phœnician, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman, agree so much as amounts to a demonstration that they were all derived originally from the same source.

“The letters were originally written from the right hand towards the left; that is, in a contrary order to that which we now practise. This manner of writing obtained among the Assyrians, Phœnicians, Arabians, and Hebrews; and from some very old inscriptions appears to have obtained also among the Greeks. Afterwards the Greeks

5. “The enchorial character, (says a writer in the *National Cyclopædia*,) seems at first to bear little or no resemblance to the hieroglyphic; but a comparison of various manuscripts that have been found in mummies, containing parallel passages in the two characters, has led to the certain conclusion that the enchorial themselves have arisen from the degradation or corruption of the sacred pictorial characters. Dr Young, in his excellent article on Egypt, in the Supplement to the *Cyclopædia*, has given specimens which are perfectly sufficient to establish the connection.”

adopted a new method, writing their lines alternately from the right to the left, and from the left to the right, after the manner in which oxen plough the ground. At length, the motion from the left hand to the right being found more natural and commodious, the practice of writing in this direction prevailed throughout all the countries of Europe."

The Greek letters were originally sixteen in number. These were subsequently augmented to twenty-four, as the necessity for additional letters presented itself.

The period at which alphabetic writing became known in Greece, says Mr Humphreys, "is one of the disputed points among archæologists; some asserting that it was unknown in the time of Homer, that is, about the ninth or tenth century before the Christian era, and that his poems were recited, like the bardic songs of the North, and preserved by oral tradition. But the passage in which that poet describes Bellerophon carrying certain tablets to the King of Lycia, on which were inscribed signs intimating that the warrior was to be put to death, appears a sufficient answer to those who assert that writing was unknown to the Greeks in the time of Homer. Besides which, Greek inscriptions on coins exist of the seventh, or, perhaps, eighth century B. C. So that we must, at all events, allow the Greek alphabet, in its earliest form, an antiquity of at least nine or ten centuries prior to the Christian era; and if, as stated, it was in existence prior to the Trojan war, twelve or thirteen." (p. 96.)

The earliest examples of Roman letters in their distinct and characteristic form, are found upon the coinage of the Republic, about 270 B. C. Their descent from the Greek letters, and remotely from the Phœnician, is generally allowed; these identical Roman letters with but slight modifications, being at the present day, the common writing forms employed by most of the civilized nations of the world.

9. *English Letters and Writing*.—We have seen that the earliest alphabets of which we have any account, the Phœnician and Ancient Hebrew, were derived probably from an Egyptian source; that the Hebrews and Phœnicians in thus taking their systems of writing from the Egyptians adopted only the phonetic or sound-expressing portion of the hieroglyphic system, and from these abbreviated picture-signs formed a set of arbitrary characters, by which they were enabled to represent the sounds in their respective languages. We have seen also that from the Phœnician characters the ancient Greek and Roman letters were derived, from the latter of which our own English alphabet is immediately descended.

The various modifications which our letters have undergone from their first rude origin down to the period when the invention of printing gave something like fixity to their forms, may be seen in Tables of the different alphabets in the Cyclopædias. (6)

6. See *Penny Cyclopædia*: Article, *Alphabet*.

The relationship between the Phœnician, Ancient Hebrew, Greek, early and later Roman, and English alphabets, is indisputable and striking. The general resemblance we find in these alphabets is all the more remarkable when we reflect that the period embraced in their transition from one another extends over upwards of three thousand years.

In the earliest periods, when writing had to be executed with an iron stylus on hard substances such as wood, stone, and metals, the characters were naturally straight and angular in their outlines. It was only when softer substances, such as tablets of wax, linen cloth, parchment, and finally paper, came to be employed, and ink and other liquid material came to be used, that letters assumed the more rounded forms peculiar to modern alphabets. The use of the reed pen, and eventually the quill, led also to the tracing of each letter without lifting the pen, and finally, to the joining of the letters in writing words; while the desire to write more rapidly led naturally to the practice of leaning the characters to the right, instead of tracing them in the perfectly upright direction in which they were originally written. In this way our current hand writing has come down to us, "the slow result of successive ages of improvement, and of the succeeding efforts of nation after nation during a long series of generations."

10. *Progress of Writing in England.*—The practice of writing in England is of comparatively recent date. Up to the period of the invention of printing, about the year 1438, it was almost exclusively in the hands of professional scribes, and was used mainly in the production of books, and for official and legal documents. The scribes who thus made a profession of copying manuscripts, were termed *Calligraphers*; their art consisting not merely in writing, but also in embellishing their work with ornamental devices. After the invention of printing, books ceased to be multiplied by written copies: the vocation of the public scribe was at an end; and private individuals set about acquiring the art of writing for themselves, as the number of professional writers gradually decreased,—an accomplishment which, we are told, even princes had rarely thought it necessary to possess before that period.

"It is not earlier than the fourteenth century," says Mr Humphreys, "that we find examples of private holograph letters—that is, letters entirely written by the hand of the person whose signature they bear; for most, indeed nearly all, of the letters of eminent persons of earlier periods, preserved in the archives of our own country and in those of neighboring nations, were written by private secretaries or public scribes, the signature alone (often merely a cross) being the work of the supposed writer." (p. 157.)

It is recorded as noteworthy that, "at the court of Henry the Eighth, even the ladies could write, as well as the king himself;" and in the British Museum sundry letters are carefully preserved, written by royal

and other distinguished personages about this period. "Some of these letters," remarks Mr Humphreys, "are much more regularly written than others; but all exhibit, more or less, both a want of freedom and the sharp angularity of the old Gothic writing, which still lingered about the formation of the letters. None of them are, in fact, written with more fluency than a modern school-boy writes Greek, and appear to have been the result of very laborious but laudable efforts to overcome a great difficulty.

"Examples of private penmanship of this epoch, are, with few exceptions, confined to eminent persons or scholars,—*the great mass of the people, even of the better classes, remaining long after the reign of Henry VIII., in utter ignorance of the art of writing.*" (p. 151.)

It was not till near the latter part of the seventeenth century that a knowledge of writing began to be regarded as an accomplishment of importance to the multitude. At that period schools were established for the express purpose of teaching writing alone; and it is to the professors of that time that we are chiefly indebted, if not for the creation, at all events for the distinctness and finish, of our present national handwriting, contrasting in this respect as it does so favorably with the almost unintelligible styles peculiar to France and other continental nations, who, like us, adopted the Roman alphabet. Writers everywhere rapidly increased, and a knowledge of writing became more and more a necessity in business and social life; till now we find it a scarcely less indispensable acquirement than speech itself.

The profession of writing-master was in those days one of considerable emolument and repute, and included in its ranks many men of rare learning and skill, who by their exquisite performances succeeded in elevating "*penmanship*" into high rank as a manipulative art, vieing even with the most finished and elaborate engraving of our own time. In this more practical age, however, we are disposed to estimate writing at its true value, *not* as in itself intrinsically important, but merely as an instrument to be *used*, an acquirement to subserve a purpose. We write now, *not* to exhibit skill in writing, as something of which to be proud, but with the common homely purpose of expressing our thoughts in visible words, of treasuring up the memory of events, of perpetuating and cementing our friendships with the absent, and of registering our business transactions. In its adaptation for these and such like uses consists the glory of the art of writing; and, according to the efficiency or otherwise with which it answers the requirements of writers must be our estimate of its value.

11. *A Briefer Means of Writing Necessary.*—We proceed now to the practical question, How far the mode of writing which has descended to us answers the requirements of writers in the present active generation, and How far it is consistent with scientific principle.

As regards, first, the *theory* of alphabetic writing, everyone who is in the least familiar with the subject, will allow that, as employed by

us at the present day, alphabetic writing is really a very imperfect thing. It has no pretension to rank as an art founded on exact principles. Neither is the alphabet, in the number of its letters, adapted to the spoken language, nor are the characters by any means the simplest that might have been chosen. The reason of this is clear: "Man, wearied at his ignorance, discontented at the continual equivokes and confusions of that species of painting so inappropriately termed 'hieroglyphic' writing, eagerly grasped an instrument which he correctly considered more efficacious and more happy. He employed it as soon as he found it capable of serving him, without waiting to carry it to the highest degree of perfection; habits became established, which must be broken by accidental shocks, before the inconveniences displayed by experience, force us to re-examine the art.

"We may almost say with truth, that since the Greeks adopted and modified the Phœnician alphabet, no improvement, no progress whatever, has been made in it. The Romans, who conquered the Greeks, only imitated them in this as in many other respects. Modern Europeans, the conquerors of the Romans, rude and wild, finding an alphabet already organized, adopted it, as they would have put on an enemy's spoils, without caring whether they fitted them or not." (7) The result is before us:—*English writing is untrue to the alphabetic theory; while it is needlessly circuitous, and practically inconvenient to every writer.*

"It has been shown," remarks Mr Humphreys, in concluding his History, "how writing, as an art, originated, *not* in an attempt to note by marks or signs the sounds of *words*, but by pictorial imitations to represent *objects*, and by their modifications, to express abstract ideas. It has been shewn, also, that this direct and obvious system was carried to great perfection before any attempt was made to invest it with the capacity of representing *sound*. It is evident that the eventual adaptation of such a series of iconic (picture) characters to the purpose of representing the sounds of language, must of necessity produce *a cumbrous and arbitrary system, altogether unworthy to rank as an art founded upon scientific principles*; yet even at the present hour such a system is the only one we employ for the notation of our language." (p. 177.)

Secondly, That the current writing only imperfectly answers the requirements of writers at the present day, we shall best realize by viewing the art in the hands of the several classes who require most to use it. We will visit first the man of letters:—

THE MAN OF LETTERS AND WRITING.

Let us enter his study, and see him in the act of writing. How vainly does his pen struggle to keep pace with the rapid flow of his thoughts. While he is penning one idea, others flash across the mind

7. Volney's "L'Alphabet Européen appliqué aux Langues Asiatiques."

and flit away for ever, before he is able to secure them, through the ill adaptedness of the instrument he is using, or rather of the art he is employing, to give them ready embodiment in words. Glance at the hurried and half-illegible manuscript, with its numerous abbreviated and half-formed words, and say, is there not evidence sufficient that such a circuitous mode of writing is a restriction upon the thought of that writer, a tax upon his time, and an imposition upon his powers of physical endurance? That essay, for instance, which he will read in the public lecture hall within the brief space of an hour, will require from six to eight hours to write; and if, as is most commonly the case, his manuscript be a second copy, carefully written out after sundry readings and revisions of the original composition, a whole day will have been expended in the writing of what one short hour will suffice to read aloud to an assembly. It is clearly not without reason that literary men, clergymen, and others who have much writing to perform, complain of the *drudgery* of writing. So irksome, indeed, is writing to some active-minded men, that they are under the necessity of employing an amanuensis to write from their dictation.

The case is thus pointedly presented by an American author:—
 “Writing the Roman (English) characters, requires at least five times more labor and time than is necessary. Thus, in making an *m*, we are obliged to employ seven strokes or motions with the pen, five for *n*, six for *w*, and thus of nearly all our letters; whereas only *one* stroke should be used to represent *one* sound. This would diminish the time and labor of writing three-fourths. To cite the author’s own case:—His subject-matter accumulates in his mind five times faster than he has physical strength to put it on paper. If the time and labor of writing were reduced fourfold,—if he could signify as much by one stroke as he now does by five,—he could produce five times as much thought; and supposing his writing to be useful, could do five times as much good. And thus of other writers, and of all who may have more thoughts than time or strength to put them on paper. Thus would mind be developed and thought quickened, to the incalculable augmentation of human happiness” (8).

The wretched handwriting of authors, clergymen, and of the educated classes, is proverbial. We find excuse for this in the circuitousness and tediousness of writing. We can understand how writing-masters, schoolboys, book-keepers, and others, who require neatness and precision rather than expedition in writing, should “write a good hand,” as the compliment is generally phrased to them; but it is a marvel almost how any attain to this who are required to write against time at all, as is necessary with literary and professional men, and those in the more active walks of life. We pass to the business man in his office:—

8. “Memory and Intellectual Development,” by O. S. Fowler.

THE BUSINESS MAN AND WRITING.

Look at him with his bundle of unanswered correspondence before him. Does he not feel impatient at the irksomeness of letterwriting, which well nigh absorbs his entire time each day, to the exclusion of attention to other important duties? He can *converse* with fifty individuals, and *so* transact much important business in a comparatively limited space of time, but if the *pen* instead of the tongue has to be employed, and that pen is required to shape each word in our customary round-about way of writing, either a much less amount of business will be transacted in the same number of hours, or a very far greater portion of time and of individual labor must be devoted to the duty. Some system of writing more expeditious than our present modified hieroglyphics, would certainly very materially contribute to the advantage of men of business.

But let us look at the question in the quieter sphere of social existence.

FAMILIAR CORRESPONDENCE AND WRITING.

In the social and family relations of life and friendship, what meaning has that lengthy apology, frequently filling an entire page of a letter, anxiously looked for day after day for many a day before the postman presents it, except that to write, as writing ordinarily requires to be executed, is a tedious piece of business—that it is a duty reluctantly undertaken; while the very formality of the composition attests that this mode of holding intercourse is altogether too tiresome a process to favor the free and familiar expression of feeling such as would take place were the *tongue* instead of the *pen* the ready instrument employed.

It is Dr Johnson, we think, who observes that “he who would have friends must keep his friendships in constant repair.” How many friendships have been lost, and to what extent members of families have become alienated in feeling, from the cessation of intercourse by letter, except at long intervals, it were vain to conjecture. Instances, however, will not be wanting in the personal experience of each reader. Pens, ink, and paper, are in every one’s possession; but the *tediousness* of writing, and the time it takes to inscribe only a few thoughts on paper in our usual hand, induce with many a disinclination to set about the business. Neglect ensues, and estrangement of feeling naturally follows, just as neglect of correspondence itself is due mainly to the cumbrousness of writing.

There is not a greater civil institution in the world than our English postal system; but even the cheap and rapid transmission of letters from one part of the country to another, fails to ensure that frequency of correspondence, and that full and complete interchange of thoughts, which it is desirable should subsist, and which doubtless would obtain, among friends, were writing less irksome than it is at present. Another illustration:—

THE YOUNG MAN AND WRITING.

You are a young man, assiduously engaged in the work of self-education. You rightly value the art of writing as an auxiliary in your studies. You resolve on keeping a *Diary*, in which to note down each day's history, and the thoughts and reflections which may arise in the mind ; or, a *Common-place book*, and think to make copious extracts from the works you design to read. You furnish yourself with the requisite manuscript books, and fill a score or two pages with writing, only to discover that you have undertaken a task which makes a greater demand on your time, and proves more wearisome in the execution, than you had at all calculated on. You find you could read a dozen pages of a book in the time it takes you to extract a passage equal in length only to one page ; and, that, to keep a diary which shall be at all satisfactory for its completeness, runs you an hour nearer the midnight time than you deem it well for your wearied powers to be astir.

If a student, there will be various other purposes for which writing will freely be required,—such as the preparation of essays, exercises in composition, abstracts of lectures. Many are the hours which must necessarily be spent each week in the mere mechanical act of tracing words in the present complex character, which might be saved and made available for other profitable duty, were writing only a less circuitous process than it is.

The use of the pen as a means of intellectual improvement is very great. That its power to subserve this important purpose would be materially enhanced were a briefer mode of writing generally adopted, is beyond doubt. But more fully to realize the disadvantages incident to our present mode of writing, let us compare it with speech itself :—

DISPARITY BETWEEN SPEECH AND WRITING.

Written words are but the transcript of *spoken* words ; writing is thus simply speech, as it were, made visible, or, “ talking on paper,” as it has been aptly designated. Conceive for a moment the necessity of our having to *d-r-a-w-l o-u-t o-u-r w-o-r-d-s i-n s-p-e-a-k-i-n-g* only at the slow rate at which even the readiest pen is able to write them on paper in our longhand method ! Could anything be imagined more ridiculous and more unbearable to anyone who had anything he was at all anxious to communicate ? Would not such a slow and tedious utterance tend in some measure to restrict the expression of thought, and to limit the intercourse subsisting between man and man ? And if *slow-speaking* would be tedious and restrictive, is not *slow-writing* just in the same respect and degree a hindrance and a restriction in business and private life, where the pen instead of the tongue has necessarily to be employed ? It is strange that the great disparity between speaking and writing, in point of facility and dispatch, should have been so long endured.

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The words that we utter in the short space of ten minutes, require an hour to write them on paper,—a result not *necessarily* contingent on writing, but due solely to the needless complexity of the alphabetic characters we employ.

There is no reason why the primary sounds in our language, of which our alphabetic characters are the representatives, should not be denoted by the simplest geometrical signs, instead of the very complex forms at present employed, and each word be traced by as few inflections of the pen as there are sounds in the words. That such a means of writing is perfectly possible, and will sooner or later be brought generally into use, we shall see in the sequel.

There never was a period in the history of the world when there was so much writing as at the present day. A brief and expeditious means of writing, adapted to the common every-day purposes of life, is indeed one of the pressing necessities of the age.

“God bless our land, and bless us all
With wisdom, we beseech;
And grant henceforth that Writing be
As fleet and free as Speech.”

CHAPTER 2.—SHORTHAND.

12. We have seen in the preceding chapter that pictures were probably the first means adopted by man for recording and perpetuating his ideas; that from abbreviated pictures, or “hieroglyphics,” the first alphabet of *letters* was probably selected; that this alphabet of modified hieroglyphics, descending through different nations from a remote date, constitutes, with only slight variations, the chief writing character employed by us at the present day. We have seen, further, that the letters thus inherited, are complex in their forms; that our current writing is, in consequence, unnecessarily circuitous, and fraught with disadvantage to writers; and, that a briefer and more facile mode of writing for common every-day use is among the pressing wants of our times.

In more leisurely days than the present, the complexity of the mode of writing which had travelled down so wonderfully from a remote period was not much felt or considered. We live, however, in very different times, when facility and dispatch are become objects of the first importance in writing.

It would be strange with such experience of the inconvenience and positive disadvantage of our *long-hand* writing as we have detailed in the preceding chapter, had no attempt been made to provide some more expeditious means. Accordingly we find that numerous methods of brief writing or *short-hand* have from time to time appeared. “STENOGRAPHY,” (literally, short writing,) has indeed been long a

word in the Cyclopædias; and its advantages as a time-and-labor-saving art have not gone unrecommended: still it is notorious that beyond the class of professional reporters, the stenographic art has failed to spread itself at all generally among the community. It is only here and there that a person is to be found possessing any degree of proficiency in the stenographic branch; while there are scarcely any who make a practical use of stenography in their ordinary business vocations.

We proceed to enumerate some of the causes which have tended to restrict the spread of shorthand since the invention of the art; referring to Mr Pitman's "*History of Shorthand*" (9) for details of the numerous systems that have appeared.

13. *Why Shorthand is so little diffused.*—Among the causes which have conspired to check the diffusion of shorthand since its invention nearly 300 years ago, we may mention, first, *the absence till very recently of facilities for gaining a knowledge of the art.* In the earlier stages of shorthand history, as much as a guinea, seldom less than half a guinea, was demanded for shorthand treatises; while a knowledge of some systems which had attained repute could be gained only by paying liberally for personal instruction from their authors, who feared to publish their methods lest their teaching practice should be thereby injured. However solicitous the public may have been to learn, it is obvious that such a restrictive policy could not fail to limit the acquisition of the art to a few privileged persons.

Again, *Shorthand has never been a recognized branch of school instruction.* In the vast majority of schools no attempt has been made to teach shorthand. In the few instances where it has been included in the school programme, very few have entered on its study; and it is not asserting more than the truth to aver, that, in no single educational establishment in the country, even at the present day, is any pretension made to teach the art systematically, and with the same thoroughness that other less useful accomplishments are sought to be imparted. Indeed, public teachers themselves are, for the most part, unacquainted with shorthand, or know it only imperfectly, and thus have been without the qualification requisite to teach the art with any success.

But the greatest hindrance to the extension of shorthand has hitherto been, *the imperfection of the stenographic systems.* In no department of science or art has there been so many crude attempts as in the construction of shorthand systems. A few only among the numerous shorthand authors have any claim to originality; the majority contenting themselves with capriciously transposing and altering

9. "A History of Shorthand from the earliest times, with the Alphabet of each system, and specimens of shorthand writing in the most popular systems." By Isaac Pitman. Price 1s. 6d., cloth 2s. 6d. London: Fred. Pitman, 20 Paternoster row.

what their predecessors had vainly presented as the *ne plus ultra* of the art, without rising at all to the consideration of the first principles necessary to be adhered to in framing a system which should be fitted for general use. Not only were most systems wanting in a proper basis, they were also miserably incomplete in detail; hence each writer found it necessary to be continually supplementing the system he had learned, and even then without being able to bring it up to any satisfactory level of perfection. Anything like uniformity in writing was out of the question. Seldom could a writer decipher the manuscript of any other individual, though using the same author's system; indeed, it was only with difficulty he could interpret his own writing after the subject-matter had ceased to be fresh in the mind. It is not surprising that a means of writing so imperfect, so unreliable, and altogether so unsatisfactory even to proficients, should advance only very slowly in popular favor.

Another reason why shorthand has made so little progress has been, *the multiplicity of shorthand systems*, without any one system being able to establish itself in public estimation as pre-eminently the *best*. The difficulty of determining with any certainty which, among the numerous systems extant, was the most worthy of attainment, has doubtless deterred numbers from even commencing the study of shorthand; while others who have commenced, have been led to change from system to system, without being able to feel confidence in any, and finally to relinquish altogether the idea of ever becoming shorthand writers. "Which is the best shorthand?" is a question continually being propounded to editors of newspapers and periodicals by anxious correspondents, who, however, rarely succeed in eliciting a satisfactory answer to the inquiry;—the editorial mind sharing in the general perplexity, and shrinking from any positive expression of opinion on the subject.

The number of shorthand systems that have been published since the first invention of the art, has been variously estimated. Mavor, who wrote in 1789, had collected between fifty and sixty different systems,—the greatest number perhaps in the possession of any individual at that time. In 1816, Lewis had collected eighty-seven systems, but eleven of them were republications of former systems, with very slight alterations; his collection costing him "more than fifteen years' labor, and an expense of more than five hundred pounds." Mr Isaac Pitman of Bath, in 1847, had collected, in addition to copies of many of the works possessed by Lewis, thirty different systems that have been published since Lewis wrote; and thirty other works that are republications of the four popular shorthand alphabets invented by Byrom, Taylor, Mavor, and Lewis. Mr Harland, of the *Manchester Guardian*, has also a library of shorthand works by eighty-seven different authors, as we gather from a list printed for private circulation. He also enumerates in his list seventy other au-

thors whose works he does not possess. Mr Pitman calculates that from the commencement of the art, upwards of two hundred different systems have been published ; and that perhaps as many others have been invented for private use which have never been printed.

We may mention also as a serious hindrance to the diffusion of shorthand, *the systematic frauds which have been practised on the public by catchpenny treatises*, (of which there are not a few now in the market,) kept continually before the eye by advertisements in the newspapers of the day. The history of these shorthand books, intended not for use but for sale, is thus given in Lewis's " Historical Account of Shorthand."—"A bookseller finds from repeated inquiries for a cheap and easy introduction to the art, that a system of Stenography would be a profitable speculation ; he therefore applies to some one of his literary laborers, and offers him five or ten pounds for the immediate production of ' A New and Universal Grammar of the Art ' that shall supersede all preceding efforts of a similar nature. The person to whom he applies, is, in all probability, utterly ignorant of shorthand ; but so tempting an offer is not to be neglected. He has recourse to the established systems, and with all possible expedition, takes an Alphabet from one, a system of Terminations from another, and from a third, a system of Joining Rules. From the heterogeneous combination of many plans, he lays down, with some little labor, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed, in a decent engraving ; and then commits his treatise to the world as the desideratum of the Art." We had the curiosity to procure specimens of several of this class of publication which we recently saw advertised, and we found that more worthless productions were never issued from the press. No one is cheated into the purchase of such works without experiencing disappointment, and without his interest in the subject of shorthand being considerably diminished,—in numerous instances preventing all further inquiry respecting the art.

Again, *Shorthand has suffered much from the hands of incompetent and unprincipled teachers*, who have professed to impart a knowledge of the art in a few brief lessons. The *theory* of shorthand writing may be conveyed to the mind in a few lessons, but the ability to write with freedom and readiness (which is what the pupil expects and desires to be put in possession of) is not to be attained without diligent application, extending over a period of several months, in the same manner that any other art is to be acquired. Hence the expectations of learners, relying on the too unqualified professions of their teachers, have been disappointed ; and thus, the completion of the stipulated course of lessons has too generally been the termination of their writing practice. Persons professing to teach " the delightful art of shorthand, so as to enable anyone to follow a speaker," in six or seven lessons, of half an hour or an hour each in length, are clearly impostors,—hindrances rather than helps to the diffusion of shorthand.

When these numerous drawbacks in connection with the extension

of shorthand are considered, it is not a matter of surprise that the art should have made but slow advance. It would have been a marvel had the result been otherwise than it is, with such disadvantages to override.

14. *Admitted Imperfection of Stenographic Systems.*—Scarcely a pen has written on the subject of shorthand that has not expressed the lament of the writer on the generally imperfect and unsatisfactory state of the art. A reviewer in the *Derbyshire Chronicle*, a few years ago, thus pointedly expresses himself:—"There have, we believe, been nearly a hundred systems of shorthand published in England within the last two centuries. Of late, seldom a year has passed without the appearance of two or three *new* or *improved* systems of stenography, which have fluttered before the public for a brief period, and then sunk into neglect to make room for the efforts of new pretenders to the discovery of that much coveted art by which the orator's eloquence is to be caught in its impassioned torrent, and fixed upon paper, as a picture of his rich and glowing mind. All these systems, as far as our observation extends, seem to have been founded upon one principle,—that of using simple characters for the different consonants of the English language, and combining these to form, as it were, the *skeleton* of each word intended to be represented, the initial and final vowels being generally indicated by dots or commas placed in different positions in relation to the adjacent consonant. Sometimes horizontal and perpendicular lines dividing the paper into compartments have been adopted in order to give different powers to the various marks according to the compartments in which they were placed, but still, the grand principle was the same as that above stated: no attempt was made to analyze the language; no thought was bestowed upon the elementary sounds which go to form human speech;—in fact, the arbitrary arrangement of the consonants in the alphabet was usually taken as it stands, and every inventor of a *new system* of shorthand did little more than adopt a fresh combination of the straight lines and curves which had been made use of by his predecessors. No wonder then that each succeeding system was found as unsatisfactory as those which had previously been given up as impracticable for general use; and hence an explication of the oft-repeated query,—Why is it that no system of shorthand is generally adopted, so as to be used for common purposes instead of longhand? The truth is, that, except in the case of reporters, who, by dint of constant practice, may make almost any system suit their purpose, every system was found to be both inadequate to express the various sounds in our language, and extremely difficult, if not impossible, to be read when the memory could not be brought to assist the eye in deciphering what had been written" (10).

To this impartial testimony we may add that of Mr Samuel Taylor, many years professor and teacher of stenography at Oxford, and the

Universities of Scotland and Ireland,—an author whose system, if not the best that has been devised, has yet done more than any other to diffuse the art of shorthand writing in this country :—

“ When I first was attached to the art of shorthand, many years ago,” (remarks Mr Taylor in the Introduction to his “ Essay intended to establish a standard for a universal system of Stenography, or Shorthand Writing,” first published in 1786,) “ I practised several of the methods then published, in hopes of becoming master of the best ; but I soon discovered, that in all of them there were a number of deficiencies, which, at different times, I endeavoured to supply. As I made further progress, I perceived more imperfections ; till at last I determined to set about forming a completer system of my own, upon more rational principles than any I had hitherto met with. Just as I was about to put this design into execution, a small manuscript upon the subject, by chance, fell into my hands, which, corresponding in some measure with the plan I had in contemplation, I continued practising by it ; for some time, making occasional improvements—for, upon examination, I found it far from perfect. Resolving to give up my whole attention to the study of this science, and having an ardent desire to make still further progress, I began to study the subject very minutely. I then perceived that all the characters which had been hitherto adopted, were improperly chosen. This induced me to prosecute the design I had formed of inventing a new set of characters for myself, independent of those which I had before used. Having succeeded in this according to my wish, from that time to the present I continually studied to improve, till, in my opinion, the power of improving was exhausted. Then, and not before, did I determine to appear in print, and communicate the result of my labors for the benefit of the public.

“ It has cost me many years’ close application and frequent trials, before I could satisfy myself, in appointing each letter its proper representative ; and I must confess that I once nearly despaired of producing an alphabet so complete and regular as I hope this will be found.”

Mr Taylor tells us that in the course of his application to the study he perused more than forty publications and manuscripts on shorthand writing, with none of which, however, was he thoroughly satisfied. Their alphabets seemed to him improperly chosen, and as improperly applied ; most of their letters being a combination of characters so awkwardly formed, that, if a practitioner could make them at all, it would be with the greatest difficulty ; while it would be with still more difficulty that he could join them one to another, so as to make them properly distinguishable when written. After particularizing certain other defects, Mr Taylor further remarks on the general imperfections of previous authors’ performances :—“ Several have set out upon good plans, but have failed in the execution of their work. Others have had neither plan nor any other thing to recommend their performances to the public, or even to render them fit for use. And not a few have their characters so very similar, that I, who am so much accustomed to short-

hand characters, could not make some of them so as to be distinguished, were I to practise writing them for years. Many of these writers, however, have had the vanity to tell the world, that they have brought the art to its utmost perfection ; though experience shows they are much mistaken, and that, after all they have done, *great room has still been left for improvement.*"

Notwithstanding the superior excellence of Taylor's system, it still came short of that much-desired perfection which should entitle it to become the "universal system" its author desired to introduce. It had one fundamental defect in common with other stenographic systems, to which we shall have occasion presently to refer,—it was based upon our current defective alphabet and erroneous mode of spelling.

We will now adduce another witness, not far removed from our own times. Mr Moat, in his "Stenographic Standard Attempted," published as recently as the year 1833, remarks,—“The only impediment to the universal adoption of this invaluable accomplishment is, not altogether in its ‘not being regarded as an object of general attention,’ but in the want of a system which shall at once command the utmost degree of brevity, simplicity, perspicuity, and facility, so happily blended with each other that nothing of the value of either may be sacrificed for the more extensive application of the rest ; and thus laying down a fundamental principle, or groundwork, which must lead to the desired perfection. *Numerous as have been the attempts to attain the desideratum of the art, it is a matter of surprise that the science of Stenography in this enlightened age, should be still so very far from complete.*

“There can be no doubt that this science will arrive at a much higher degree of perfection ; and we may be assured that some future author will be crowned with that success which shall entitle him to the deserved appellation of ‘Universal Stenographer,’ whose work shall be reduced to that elegant simplicity which must characterize its worth, and ensure its general adoption and lasting establishment. *When such a system shall appear, it will be the nation's honor (as it must be its pride) which gave it birth, to foster it with parental care, and make it generally useful, by introducing it as a necessary branch of modern education.*”

Mr Moat tells us that he commenced the practice of Shorthand at a very early period in life, and that it afforded the pleasurable amusement of upwards of five-and-thirty years in revising the apparent errors and inconsistencies of Byrom's system, which he first learned, and in searching in, and collecting from, other treatises that he could meet with, of which he made a collection of *sixty*. Some weight may thus reasonably be attached to his testimony as to the “much higher degree of perfection needed,” especially as his own production is not excepted in his remarks.

15. *Requisites of a Universal Shorthand.*—In any shorthand which aspires to the position of a universal system, fitted not merely for report-

ing, but for *common writing purposes*, we require that it be *brief*, and especially that it be perfectly *legible*. Lacking the indispensable quality of legibility, a brief system of writing can be of no practical value in every day-life. Of what advantage is a short road to a traveler if it be treacherous and insecure? A circuitous path that is safe and reliable is much better than a shorter way that is not to be depended on. And so the public has wisely judged between longhand and the stenographic systems; retaining in common use the more circuitous, but more reliable mode of writing. But as the road that is the most direct and at the same time safe and easy, absorbs, by degrees, the common traffic; so, eventually, will *shorthand* come to be employed for ordinary writing purposes, and that as soon as the public shall feel assured that a system legible as longhand and five or six-fold briefer, possessing sufficient stability to ensure uniform practice, is in existence.

Of course we are not so sanguine as to expect that the present generation of business men, and those who have passed the *learning* period of life, could be induced to alter their common habits of writing however clear to their minds might be the advantages attending the use of a common shorthand. But the rising generation might reasonably be expected to adopt the more expeditious mode, in cases where dispatch in writing was at all needed. Parents once fairly satisfied of the existence of a common and reliable shorthand, would everywhere desire their children to attain it. Teachers, once furnished with the proper facilities for teaching the art, would adopt it as a branch of common instruction. Our young men once fully alive to its advantages, would eagerly enter on its acquisition. Thus gradually, and almost without our being aware of the wonderful change, would another "Utopia" be realized, and future generations marvel that a common shorthand was not at a much earlier period introduced.

16. *Fundamental Defects of Stenographic Systems*.—A fundamental defect in all stenographic systems consists in their being founded on our imperfect alphabet and mode of spelling, and in their being framed rather for the reporter than for the general writer. The leading idea in their construction seems to have been *brevity*, with just as much legibility as might suffice to render the writing decipherable with the help of the memory, the context, and the judgment, to assist the eye in transcribing. In illustration of the uncertainty of the stenographic methods, we give the following specimen of what is termed the "Orthography of Shorthand," taken from a shorthand publication :—

“ Frm thrst f rl wt dr dsstrs flw
 Hw flms tht glt wh prd s tt t glw
 Wsh gns n wsh dsr srmnts dsr
 Hp fns ' bls , nvy fds ' fr
 Frm krm t krm sprs ' frious sl
 Nr lws nr oth nr frs ts rg contrl
 Tl vn t lnth awks sprmly gst
 , lvls l ts hty skms n dst.”

The verse stands unconnected with anything else, and the reader is expected to make what he can out of it. Extensive practice in writing and reading may enable reporters, and a few others who persevere with the art, to get through such "orthography" with comparatively little difficulty; just as we manage to guess our way through the badly-spelled and wretchedly-written compositions of individuals with whose peculiar hand we have become familiarized. But, surely, something more than this uncertainty is necessary in a shorthand to entitle it to be used in the free intercourse of private and business life. It is not sufficient that it be possible to *puzzle out* what is written; it is indispensable that the writing should be capable of being read with certainty and even with fluency, regardless alike of any knowledge of the subject-matter, of the hand that wrote, or of the length of time that may have elapsed since it was written. The above consonantal enigma, when supplied with the requisite vowels, reads thus:—

"From thirst of rule what dire disasters flow!
How flames that guilt which pride has taught to glow!
Wish gains on wish, desire surmounts desire,
Hope fans the blaze, and envy feeds the fire;
From crime to crime aspires the furious soul,
Nor laws, nor oath, nor force, its rage control;
Till heaven at length awakes supremely just,
And levels all its haughty schemes in dust."

We might enumerate other defects of the stenographic systems; but enough has been said to make it apparent that no such systems can ever hope to establish themselves sufficiently in popular favor to lead to their adoption as substitutes for our current writing, notwithstanding their obvious advantage in the important point of brevity.

CHAPTER 3.—PHONOGRAPHY, OR, WRITING BY SOUND.

17. In the preceding sections we have seen that a more expeditious means of writing than our current longhand is an urgent want among writers at the present day. We have seen also that while numerous methods of brief writing, known familiarly by the name "Stenography" or "Shorthand," have been long before the public, they have succeeded in attracting little attention except among professional reporters; that they have been radically defective in principle and imperfect in their details, and altogether wanting in those essential features which should entitle them to be used for every-day business and private purposes.

No mere *short* hand can ever hope to be generally adopted on the ground of its possessing the *one* recommendation of *brevity*. *Legibil-*

ity is an equally important, nay, even a greater, necessity to the writer, and it is mainly from lack of this indispensable quality in the stenographic systems that have appeared,—from the great uncertainty in reading what has been written,—that they have failed to command that practical recognition from the public which otherwise they might have received.

We devote this chapter specially to an elucidation of *Phonography*, the invention of Mr Isaac Pitman, of Bath, as affording the long-wished-for writing,—a philosophical, brief, and yet perfectly legible and reliable mode of writing, adapted *for every-day common use*,—a “shorthand” for every writer, and not merely for the reporter; available for letter-writing, and not merely for following a public speaker; serviceable for the most ordinary business life, and not merely for restricted professional use. Noiselessly, but rapidly and extensively, has the system spread itself since its first invention,—not more rapidly than its merits deserve,—not more widely than its pre-eminent utility justly entitles it to be known. Thousands of persons in England, America and the British Colonies, are daily making use of the art in the free intercourse of correspondence, and for the numerous other uses to which writing is applied; and it is to aid in extending yet more widely and generally a knowledge of its advantages that the subject is here prominently treated.

18. *Origin of Phonography*.—The following account of the origin of Phonography was given by Mr Pitman at a Phonetic Soirée held at Ipswich, 17 May, 1845. (See “Phonotypic Journal” for 1845, page 142.)

“It has been intimated to me, that I might usefully employ the brief portion of the time of this meeting which falls to my share, in giving a view of the developement of the Phonographic system in my own mind and practice. It will afford me pleasure to do so—particularly, because the review will give me an opportunity of preventing misconceptions which might arise, and of removing any that may have arisen, in the minds of some persons, as though this grand Writing and Printing Reformation, which we now fearlessly advocate and pledge ourselves to, were some deeply laid scheme contemplated from the time of the first publication of the Phonographic Shorthand, and that the means we have adopted for the diffusion of the system, were chosen as the most likely to carry the Reform. We planned nothing of the kind; no change in the habits of society was contemplated, but a change has come to some extent, and is coming, as the unavoidable consequence of the propagation of those principles of truth on which the art of writing ought to be based. I must throw myself on your kind indulgence, while my own pursuits are the subject of my remarks.

“In one word, I may say that Phonography has resulted from my being desirous to obtain a correct enunciation of words, and my constant practice of shorthand in what we now call the old school. But

must be a little more explicit than this. When I was about 17 years of age, I had read most of our standard English authors, and had a tolerable acquaintance with the language as it existed in books, but I had not enjoyed the opportunity of hearing it *spoken*. The language of every-day life consisted of but few words, and the pronunciation of all the rest I was obliged to *guess*, or turn them out in a pronouncing dictionary. I thought it would be less trouble to read the dictionary through, and copy out the words that I was accustomed mentally to mispronounce; for I had, of course, some idea of the sounds of the letters, and the position of the accent in each word. I saw too that by this plan I should secure other words that I had not happened to meet with in the course of my reading. When my task was finished, I had a list of 2 or 3,000 words that I had not simply to learn the pronunciation of—this would have been an easy task—but I had to unlearn the false mode in which I had been used to utter them to myself while reading. I must account for my extreme ignorance in this respect by observing that I had enjoyed only the education of a national school, from which I was taken, I think, at about the age of 12, and became under-clerk in the establishment of a clothier in the West of England, where my father was manager. These columns of words I read over, and over, and over again, both tacitly and aloud, until I was well acquainted with them.

“About a year afterwards, I commenced the practice of shorthand, and have continued it to the present time, a period of 15 years. I read through ‘Walker’ again for the same purpose about four years after, and particularly studied the ‘Principles of English Pronunciation’ prefixed to the dictionary, and the ‘Key to the Pronunciation of Classical and Scripture Proper Names;’ both of these parts of the book I read several times. This perusal of ‘Walker’ I must consider the commencement of my Phonographic career, though the name ‘Phonography’ was not thought of till many years after. By this means I obtained some acquaintance with the alphabet of the spoken language, which, as we all know, is quite different from the alphabet of the written language.

“During the first seven years of my shorthand practice, I wrote Taylor’s system, never using longhand except when writing to persons ignorant of the more excellent way. People are now coming to the conclusion that the shortest way of doing anything is the best, provided it is a safe one. I then tried to construct a system on the Phonetic principle, and have gone on using and improving it until the present time.

“I must not pass over an event that preceded the publication of the first edition of Phonography, in 1837, because it is one of those apparently trifling events on which (as indeed on all such circumstances) important issues depend. I had then written Taylor’s system about seven years, had used it a good deal, and could by it report a speaker at 100 words per minute; but this power was not gained until after

five years of rather extensive practice. Having myself experienced the advantages arising from the use of shorthand,—in the facility with which I could make extracts from books, write letters, keep a diary, etc.,—I desired to see it generally taught in British, National, and all other schools, but there was no cheap copy of the system to be obtained. Taylor published his book in 1786, at a guinea. Harding, in 1823, brought out an improved edition, for 3s. 6d., but even this price was too high for that class of school boys whom I had particularly in my mind. In the spring of 1837, I drew up a Manual of the art, illustrated with two plates, price 3d., and sent it to Mr Bagster for publication. He submitted the manuscript to the judgment of a person skilled in reporting, who did not think it brief enough to meet the wants of the reporter; and about that time, or soon afterwards, several cheap editions of Taylor's system were issued, the most popular of which is Odell's, at 8d. It was feared that the sale of the book would not be sufficient to repay the cost of publication, and Mr Bagster advised me not to put it to press, stating, also, that if I could get up an original system he would gladly take charge of it.

“Desirous of effecting my object, I commenced by making a distinction between the long and short vowels, as they are commonly called, preserving the unnatural pairing of them that is exhibited in most grammars and dictionaries—namely, *mate, mat*; *me, met*; *pine, pin*; *no, not*; *tube, tub*; making the vowel sign heavy for the first sound and light for the second, and using a dot in three places and a stroke in two, according to the plan of Harding's “Taylor Improved.” In this scheme no notice was taken of the vowels in *mah, maw, move, and book*. I was, however, anxious to provide signs for them, for I had too often experienced difficulty in reading my shorthand, in consequence of expressing so many different sounds by one mark. It is the case that in all the old systems you must write the vowels according to the common spelling, or leave them out altogether. It is unnecessary for me to say to an assembly of Phonographers, that in either case confusion and difficulty in reading must be the result.

“While pursuing these experiments with the vowels, I also tried numerous arrangements of the consonant signs, and in November, 1837, was published the first edition of the system, under the title of ‘Stenographic Sound-Hand,’ at 4d.

“In January, 1840, simultaneously with the establishment of the admirable system of penny postage, the second edition of the system was published under the title of ‘Phonography,’ the whole being comprised in a page of the size of letter paper. It was engraved on a steel plate, and sold for 1d.

“Copies of this edition, which is considered the greatest curiosity in the art of Shorthand, that ever appeared, may still be had. About 20,000 impressions were disposed of, and the plate, which I have by me, will yield as many more.

“We now come to an important period in the history of Phono-

graphy—the publication of the *Phonographic Journal*. After the appearance of the first edition of the system, I used to spend my Midsummer and Christmas vacations in traveling and recommending the subject of Phonetic writing to the attention of teachers, and to all who were likely, or ought, to take an interest in it. While lecturing and teaching at Manchester, at the close of 1841, it was proposed by some of the Phonographers of that town, that a monthly periodical should be issued, done in lithographed Phonography. I tried an experiment by writing a page, which turned out very well, and directly got up the first number of the *Phonographic Journal*. The work was increased by the addition of letter-press at the commencement of the second volume, which bore the title of the *Phonotypic and Phonographic Journal*. It was again enlarged at the commencement of the third volume, and Phonotypic printing was tried, the subject having been in contemplation nearly two years.”

Edition after edition was demanded until “Phonography” has now reached its tenth edition, making 150 thousand copies of the “Manual” that have issued from the press. We thus see that it was not till some time after the publication of the system that the attempt to *print* as well as *write* phonetically was first made, in connection with the present organized Orthographic Reform. Numerous works have since been printed in the phonotypic method, and are enumerated in Mr Pitman’s catalogue of phonetic publications.

Phonography, then, had its rise and growth in the contemplation of three evils,—the defectiveness of our orthography, the inconvenient length of ordinary writing, and the imperfections of the stenographic methods. On the two latter of these evils we have fully remarked in the preceding chapter. With respect to our orthography (so called), it is a proverb of inconsistency and difficulty,—a mere caricature of English speech. “The English system of spelling (I protest against its being called *orthography*)” observes Sir Charles E. Trevelyan, “is a labyrinth, a chaos, an absurdity, a disgrace to our age and nation. It forms the principal difficulty of our language, (which is the more provoking, as there is nothing in the structure of English which calls for it,) and causes, to annually increasing millions in all the four quarters of the globe, an enormous unnecessary expenditure of valuable time, and still more valuable temper. The amount of vexation and discouragement and loss of time which is caused every year, especially to foreigners, by the extremely incorrect way of spelling now in use, is incalculable.” (11) We refer to Mr Ellis’s admirable “*Plea for Phonetic Spelling, or the Necessity of Orthographic Reform,*” price 1s. 6d.; and to “*The Claims of Phonetic Spelling,*” by a Free Church Minister, price 1d, (12) for a fuller elucidation of this branch of the subject.

11. “Papers on the Application of the Roman Letters to the Languages of Asia.” London: Longman and Co., 1854.

12. London: Pitman, 20 Paternoster Row.

19. *Fundamental Principles of Phonography*.—It was a happy inspiration which led Mr Pitman to abandon all dependence on our imperfect alphabet and mode of spelling, (on which the stenographic systems were based,) and adopt the only true and reliable plan of writing words *as sounded*,—that is, in conformity with their pronunciation. Phonography is thus “not the old systems of shorthand worked up into a new form, and given to the world under a new name. On the contrary, it involves an entirely new principle, inasmuch as it is founded upon a careful analysis and classification of the sounds produced by the human voice in speaking, irrespective of the customary alphabetical arrangement of the letters;—a principle which had never been adopted systematically as an essential part of any former [popular] work on Stenography.” (13) In most treatises on Stenography, the learner is directed to “spell each word according to its sound;” but the direction was practically a nullity, because the means for so writing words were not provided,—the direction meaning little beyond the omission of silent letters in certain classes of words in our current orthography, and the substitution of *k* for *c*, *f* for *ph*, and so on, in such words as *cape*, *ph*ysic, etc.

In proceeding to construct his system, it was necessary for Mr Pitman to determine, as a preliminary step, what were the elements for which representatives must be provided in a phonetic alphabet of the English language. He had to furnish a distinct and independent sign for each element, so that, in writing, each character should be used for *one* sound or element only. His next important point was to secure for each element a *simple* sign, capable of being struck by a single movement of the pen. These were the leading principles which guided the inventor in the construction of the system; and the success which has attended his endeavors, affords another illustration of the importance of founding an art, not on mere conventional and arbitrary usage, but on exact scientific principles.

20. *English Speech-Sounds*.—In analysing the spoken language, we find that it consists only of a very few radically distinct elements or sounds, usually discriminated into *Vowels* and *Consonants*, from different combinations of which all the many thousand words in our current speech and literature are compounded. We will consider these two classes of elements, according to Mr Pitman’s classification.

VOWEL ELEMENTS.

There are in all six simple *long* vowel or voice sounds in the Eng-

13. Pitman’s “History of Shorthand” contains an account of five systems that had been published, based on the phonetic principle, before “Phonography” appeared. Not one of them received any degree of popular favor, because they all lacked one or both of the essential elements of shorthand, facility of execution and legibility. The existence of these works, Mr Pitman tells us, was unknown to him till many years after the publication of “Phonography.”

lish language. They occur in natural sequence, and are indicated by the *italic* letters, in the words

alms, ale, eel; all, ope, food.

There are also six *short* vowel sounds, which pair very nearly with the preceding long vowels. These are indicated by the *italic* letters in the words

ăm, ěll, žll; ōn, ŭp, fŏŏt.

Besides these there are also several diphthongal or *compound* vowel sounds, which practically require single representatives in phonetic shorthand. They are indicated by the *italic* letters in the words

aye, ice, oil, owl.

Each of the long and short vowel sounds is entitled to an independent representative in an alphabet for writing English. How preposterous that in our every-day writing, and printing, we should persist in making the *five* letters *a, e, i, o, u*, do duty for these *twelve* essentially distinct vowel elements, as well as for the two diphthongs in *pine, tube*! It is mainly owing to this deficiency in the vowel representatives, that so much uncertainty exists in the spelling and reading of English.

CONSONANT ELEMENTS.

A consonant is generally understood to imply a certain position of the organs of speech, rather than actual sound or vocality. The lips, the teeth, the palate, and the throat, are all auxiliaries in producing those various modifications of vocal breath or voice, by which syllables are made distinguishable from one another, and words shaped into the finished form of language. Mr Pitman's classification of these elements is into *mute* or explosive articulations, proceeding in order from the throat to the lips, then into *semi-vocals* or continuous consonants, in the same order; and lastly, *nasal*, and *lingual* articulations. A further distinction is into *breath* and *voice* consonants, in which they mostly are found to pair, as in the similar instance of the long and short vowels above alluded to.

The order of the mute and continuous consonants, the former made by the contact of various parts of the mouth, and the latter by a stream of *breath* in addition, is thus,

k, t, ch, p; sh, s, th, f,

as given initially in speaking the words *keep, take, cheer, part, shawl, seek, thigh, fear*; the corresponding *voice* elements, being

g, d, j, b; zh, z, th, v,

as in *game, day, joke, bard; vision, zeal, there, view*.

The nasal and lingual articulations are

ng, n, m; l, r,

as in *sing, net, man; leap, rain*.

The remaining elements are the two coalescents and the aspirate,

y, w; h,

as give initially in speaking the words, *yoke, way, heap*.

CHAPTER 3.—PHONOGRAPHY, OR WRITING BY SOUND.





21. *The Phonographic Alphabet.*—Phonography being designed to be a *brief*, as well as a phonetic system of writing, it is obvious that the current writing letters were unsuitable for Mr Pitman's purpose in constructing his alphabet. To select his characters from previous stenographic systems, too, was not the plan of a man who had started with a *principle* clearly in his mind. Accordingly, like a true philosopher, he went direct to Euclid, and in the point, the straight line, and the curve or segment of the circle, found the requisite simple forms for his alphabet. We will take first the consonant signs as we find them in the phonographic system.

1. CONSONANT SIGNS.—It was found that a straight line could be struck in four different directions, even in rapid manipulation, without risk of confusing one line with another, as in the following diagram,



the lines in the second and fourth directions being inclined exactly midway between the perpendicular and horizontal. In a similar manner a circle divided by a horizontal and a perpendicular line through its centre, furnishes four equally distinguishable characters; and other four, when divided by two diagonal lines passing through its centre. Again: each sign can be represented to the eye under two aspects, namely, light and heavy,—a fact which stenographic authors appear to have overlooked. The straight and curved characters thus furnished were exactly sufficient for the representation of the consonants of the phonographic alphabet, without any one letter requiring a compound form. This is another point in which phonography compares advantageously with the stenographic systems; many of the characters provided in nearly all stenographic alphabets being not simple, but compound marks, requiring *two* movements of the pen in tracing them.

Advantage was taken of the natural affinity existing between the *breath* and *voice* consonant elements, to represent the thin or breathed articulation of each pair by the thin or lighter character, and the thickened or voiced articulation by the thicker sign,—similar sounds being represented by similar signs, Thus

 is *p*,  *b*; | *t*, | *d*;  *f*,  *v*; etc.,

—a correspondence between sign and sound which not only the mind perceives to be strictly logical and harmonious, but which the hand also feels to be consistent, and perfectly natural and easy in practice.

2. VOWEL SIGNS.—The vowel signs in Phonography consist of

simple dots or short marks. These dots and marks it was found could be placed to the consonant strokes in three different positions, namely, the commencement, the middle, and the end of the strokes, and yet be sufficiently distinct from each other in writing. Like the consonant signs, they could also be written light and heavy. In this way the twelve long and short vowel elements are provided for in the phonographic alphabet,—the compound vowels being appropriately represented by small angular characters, agreeing with their compound sounds.

The alphabet of Consonant and Vowel Signs then, stands thus:—

CONSONANTS.

EXPLODENTS.			CONTINUANTS.		
K	—	leek	SH	↗	vicious
G	—	league	ZH	↗	vision
T		fate	TH	(wreath
D		fade	TH	(wreathe
CH	/	etch	S)	hiss
J	/	edge	Z)	his
P	\	rope	F	\	safe
B	\	robe	V	\	save

NASALS.		
NG	↘	sing
N	↘	seen
M	↘	seem

LIQUIDS.		
L	↗	fall
R	↘	for
COALESCENTS, Y	↗	
W	↘	
ASPIRATE, H (.)		

	LONG.	VOWELS.	SHORT.
1. AH	·	alms	ă at
2. A	·	ape	ě et
3. E	·	eat	ĩ it
4. AU	—	all	ö on
5. O	—	ope	ŭ up
6. OO	—	ooze	öö full

DIPHTHONGS.

\angle	\vee	\triangleright	\wedge	\smile
<i>aye</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>voice</i>	<i>now</i>	<i>new</i>

The upright stroke | in the Vowel arrangement above, is used merely to indicate the *position* in which the dots and short strokes are placed to consonant characters in writing—namely, at the beginning, middle, and end.

Not only have we here a perfectly orderly and philosophical classification of the different elements and signs,—the easiest sign in writing being made the representative of the most frequently recurring sound in the language,—but the characters combine with each other with the greatest facility, and without the awkwardness and unsightliness of form which characterize most of the stenographic methods. Transpose any one of the consonant characters in the alphabet, and the result in writing is less satisfactory. It is, indeed, the conclusion of practical writers of Phonography, that “the alphabet of the system cannot be shaken till a new Geometry is discovered.”

22. *Exemplification of “Writing by Sound.”*—In illustrating the principle of writing by sound, let it be remembered that the preceding alphabetic signs have no double function—that each character represents one, and only *one*, invariable sound, namely, that assigned to it in the alphabet; and, secondly, that in writing words, the same sounds are uniformly written with the same alphabetic signs, no matter what the peculiar spelling employed in our quasi-historic orthography. No superfluous letters are used in any word. There are no such capricious variations in writing the same sound as we find in the strangely diversified spellings *mate*, *pay*, *gaol*, *pain*, *straight*, *great*, *they*, *veil*, *reign*, *weight*, in all which words the long vowel sound *a* is uniformly heard. Nor are such inconsistencies perpetrated in writing as in the spellings *r-u-m* rum, *c-o-m-e* come, *d-u-m-b* dumb; *l-a-u-g-h-t-e-r* laughter, *s-l-a-u-g-h-t-e-r* slaughter; *l-i-g-h-t* light, *k-i-g-h-t* (we beg pardon) *k-i-t-e* kite, *h-e-i-g-h-t* height; *r-o-o-m* room, *t-o-m-b* tomb; *r-o-v-e* rove, *d-o-v-e* dove, *m-o-v-e* move, etc. In short “writing by sound” means writing *the correct pronunciation*, of which the *ear* is the arbiter, and not the memory,—writing according to reason and common sense, instead of according to a method in which rule and reason avail but little to the writer. But, to our examples:—

Suppose we wish to write the word *tea* in Phonography. The ear tells us that the word is made up of an initial consonant *t*, and following simple vowel *e*. Accordingly we take the two characters provided in the phonographic alphabet for the expression of these two sounds, and

we have the word |. *tea*. The letter *a* is not used, because it is not sounded.

To express the word *eat*, which is composed of the same two sounds as *tea*, in reversed order, we write thus, *eat*.

The word *tame* in like manner is composed of the consonant *t*, the simple vowel *a*, and the consonant *m*, and is accordingly written with the three letters provided by the alphabet for the expression of these sounds, thus *tame*.

Another example is the word *gnaw*, which comprises but two sounds, *n* and following *au*, written *gnaw*.

The word *nought*, which contains the same two sounds as in the preceding example, is expressed by the simple addition of *t* to the compound thus *nought*.—No less than *four* letters are used in ordinary writing to express the single vowel sound occurring in this word, or *six* letters in all for the *three* sounds the word contains! In Phonography the word is properly expressed by three letters for the three sounds; thus, *nought*.

A similar example is the word *caught*, the true sound of which is expressed by three letters, thus, *caught*.

The word *talk*, which contains precisely the same sounds as *caught*, in reversed order, is written *talk*.

Other examples, which will be readily appreciated by the reader, on referring to the alphabet, are

may, *aim*, *ache*, *key*, *knee*, *ought*, *oak*, *take*, *tomb*,
mate, *note*, *coat*, *make*, *came*, *comb*.

Examples with *short* vowels are

mat, *gnat*, *met*, *it*, *kit*, *not*, *cut*, *could*.

Examples with *compound* vowels are

tie, *time*, *toy*, *toil*, *out*, *now*.

In looking at these examples, it is impossible not to be struck with the simple and truthful way in which each word is expressed by the phonographic signs. Does a word contain three sounds? three signs suffice accurately to express it; these three signs requiring only three motions of the pen in tracing them. But simple as are the alphabetic characters, still further brevity is necessary to facilitate the writing of words comprising more syllables than one, and to quicken writing up

to anything like speaking speed. Let us see what contrivances Mr Pitman has adopted to ensure this further brevity.

23. *Abbreviative Principles of Phonography*.—We have remarked as a distinguishing and distinctive feature in the phonographic alphabet, that each consonant sign is a *simple* uncompounded mark. Each of these signs can thus be varied in several ways, by the addition of initial and terminating hooks, loops, and circles; furnishing, by the application of a few rules, a series of compound and easily written forms, in number more than ten or fifteen-fold that of the alphabetic characters themselves. Take for instance the character | *t*. From this *one* outline may be obtained the following forms:—

| p p p p p J J J J J J J J L L L L L L L L

And so on with the rest of the straight characters. These compound forms Mr Pitman assigns appropriately to represent those numerous consonant groups which abound in our language; as in the words *speak*, *play*, *preach*, *spread*, *train*, *strain*, *scrawl*, etc.; two, three, and in some instances even five letters being by this means expressed by one character. A large amount of abbreviation is in this manner gained, materially lessening the labor of writing, and even increasing the legibility of what is written.

Again; each single, double, and treble consonant outline is written *half-size*, to signify an added *t* or *d*,—a principle exceedingly useful in representing the past tense of verbs, and by the application of which great additional brevity in writing is secured.

Another useful expedient is the employment of *Grammalogues*, or letter-words. By this means the most frequently recurring words in the language, as *the*, *and*, *of*, *that*, *which*, etc., are represented by single characters, not arbitrarily chosen, but such as are always suggestive of the word. The frequency with which these little words occur is such, that twenty of them constitute one-third of the words used in ordinary speech and composition, and one hundred (which is about the number adopted in Phonography,) amount to above one half of the language. To be able to express such words by a single character is a great advantage to the writer, especially as they are equally legible as when written in full.

Other beautiful abbreviative contrivances are furnished in the phonographic system; but as our purpose is simply to exhibit Phonography in its leading principles, and not to teach the art in detail, we must refer to Mr Pitman's *Manual of Phonography* for further illustrations.

"Unlike all old stenographies," observes the Rev. Dr Whedon,(13) "Phonography is, to a wonder, free from all *arbitrary* points. *Principle* directs in the selection of the elemental letter. *Principle* guides at each successive rule. *Principle* selects the word-signs or abbreviation-marks. Memory and reason, therefore, harmonize in most

13. In the "Ladies' Repository," quoted in the *Phonetic Journal*, 1856, p. 86.

delightful proportion, and render each a wonderful mutual aid. The ingenuity of the series of contrivances makes it a sort of amusement; while the singular facility it produces of accomplishing much in little, creates, frequently, a sort of passion for its intellectual exercise."

In the *Reporter's Companion*, an adaptation of Phonography to *verbatim reporting*, the reader will find the abbreviative principle carried to its utmost limits, consistent with legibility and a due regard for the general phonetic principle on which the system is based. It is no trifling feat of manual dexterity for the pen to be made to keep pace with that very voluble organ, the tongue, in the expression of words; especially when, as with some public speakers, from 150 to 200 words are enunciated, in the space of one minute. Hence the necessity of those abbreviative expedients which, with so much ingenuity, have been furnished in what we may term the *steno-phonographic* division of Mr Pitman's system, provided specially for the reporter.

24. *Popular Claims of Phonography*.—A chief source of the popularity of Phonography is unquestionably in its being founded on a phonetic analysis of the language, as we have already pointed out. The truthfulness and simplicity of the principle quickly strike home to the minds of intelligent persons who are led to examine the system; while, in practice, it is equally satisfactory. No sooner does a person enter upon the practice of Phonography than he begins to feel that his pen is really turning words into shapes,—a discovery which cannot fail favorably to impress one who all his life has been accustomed to the whimsicalities and contradictions of our so-called orthography.

But, after all, we must look for the permanent popularity of Phonography in its practical *usefulness*,—in its power to meet the wants of the multitude of writers, who, in this active generation, feel urgently the need of such a system as it professes to be. It was in this respect that the stenographic systems so greatly disappointed. In their construction the requirements of the reporter appear to have been the paramount consideration with their authors; scarcely any thought being bestowed upon the wants of the more numerous class of ordinary writers. In the construction of Phonography, on the other hand, the requirements of the general writer and of the reporter have been both specially considered. We are thus furnished, as indicated in the preceding section, with *two distinct styles of Phonography*—one for common writing purposes, and the other for reporting,—the second style being only an extension of the first, and not a new system in itself.

It is claimed for Phonography, in its first style, that it is as legible as common writing. It can be written four or five times as fast. Being founded on a true and simple analysis of English speech, it may be used with facility by those even who are unable to spell in accordance with the usual arbitrary orthography. It may be employed with the utmost freedom in correspondence, where both parties have learned the system. It is available in private book-keeping. In literary

composition, it is a ready and reliable instrument. It may be used with safety by the initiated in the lecture-room and the pulpit. The author may compose his book in phonography, and the compositor "set up" from the copy. The student may make notes and extracts in the system without the smallest fear of their being illegible to him at any time in the future. In short, for every purpose for which ordinary writing is used, phonography may with advantage be employed, excepting perhaps in the making of one's will, and in legal documents. It will save time to every writer. It will save labor to every writer. It will materially economize paper, and yield other personal advantages and delights which it is not necessary we should here particularize. We have said enough, we think to make it manifest that if the public will only wake up to it, the much desiderated writing is here, around and among them, silently working in the hands of their more thoughtful and intelligent neighbors, whose good fortune it has been to realize the value of the system in practice.

With regard to the second, or reporting style of Phonography, its superiority over all other reporting systems is on all hands admitted, where any knowledge of its capabilities exists. The admirable and thoroughly exhaustive manner in which the system has been wrought out into detail, and tested by the practice of proficient writers, is indeed a boon which every reporter will well know how to appreciate. It has already nearly displaced the stenographic systems in connection with newspaper reporting, both in this country and in the United States of America, and we have no doubt will, eventually, be the only reporting system used in connection with the press.

25. *Phonography in Actual Practice*.—A large volume might be filled with approving notices of Phonography that have from time to time appeared in the newspapers and periodicals, and from men of advanced intelligence and position in society, who have been led to examine the phonographic system. We select a few that have been published, more particularly where the adaptability of Phonography for some special purpose is spoken to :—

Phonography and Letter Writing.—"I have just received, here in Long Island, from a friend in Cincinnati, a mysterious epistle, which may form a small text for a large discourse. It is a *letter* of so tiny a magnitude that the full sheet, single fold, is not larger than the envelope that enshrines it. Yet brief as is its apparent length, and written, as it was, with a telegraphic rapidity, it really embraces as much matter as an ordinary well-filled sheet of note paper. I read with the ease of fairly written text, and feel a sort of *gratified sense of power* in the fact, that the same feat of compressed performance is accomplished in written correspondence, that McCormick's reaper wins in the harvest, or the steam locomotive in our travel. Those cabalistic stringlets on that diamond little page, my fair friend, is *Phonography*—and you and Phonography ought to be better acquainted."—*Rev. D. D. Whedon, D.D. in the "Ladies' Repository."*

General Utility of Phonography.—A young man who lately acquired a knowledge of Phonography, received from a friend a letter questioning the utility of the art. He replied as follows, through the medium of the *Phonetic Journal*, where the letter of his friend had been published:—"I am such a great deal better with Phonography than I should be without it, that I am at a loss where to start to enumerate the advantages I have derived from it. I get letters written in Phonography, and I send letters away written in the same style. I can read them better than when written in the old method; and I can write them three times as fast, and have no need of a Dictionary before me, to see how a particular word is spelled, which is a great advantage phonographers have over all other writers. I write a Journal every night, which takes me ten or fifteen minutes. When I wrote it in the old style, I used to be an hour: thus I save at least forty-five minutes. If I go to a lecture, I can take notes of it, which is another advantage that I had not with the old system of writing. Although my friend is both a good and a swift writer, I would wager that I would copy a book in Phonography, in one-fourth of the time that he will with his old writing; and then, I will read mine as well as he reads his. If I were obliged to have only one system of writing, and I had my choice, I would choose Phonography, because it is so simple and plain. There is no wonder that men become enthusiasts in Phonography, when they have seen the advantages of it."

"The extent of the change which Phonography is destined to make in this world, is yet unknown. That it will be great, there cannot be the least doubt. The art of reporting speeches and sermons, will be, or has already been, completely revolutionized. But we may clearly see, that this is not the extent of its influence, but it will be exerted upon all the ramifications of education and literature. It comes to lighten the labors of the clerk at the desk, the lawyer at the bar, the editor in his sanctum, the minister, the statesman, the traveler, the student, and the letter writer."—*A Correspondent in the Cincinnati Type of the Times.*

Phonography for Authors.—"To literary men of all classes, we recommend Phonography as the very thing they have been so long in want of, and as an art which will amply repay the cost of its acquisition. Being so legible, the compositor who has received some little instruction in it, can readily set up the types from well-written phonographic copy."—*Liverpool Mercury.*

"The manuscript of these pages was entirely composed in Phonetic Shorthand, and set up by the compositors from this shorthand copy."—*A Plea for Phonetic Spelling; or, the Necessity of Orthographic Reform.* By Alexander John Ellis, Esq., B.A. Demy 8vo., pp. 180.

"When we consider the amount of manual labor necessary for a man to write an 8vo volume of five or six hundred pages, and that by Phonography, he could, with an equal amount of practice, write it

in one-sixth, perhaps in one-tenth of the time, we can form some idea of the importance of such a time-and-life-saving system.—*M. Browne, Esq., Coroner for Nottingham.*

Phonography in Business.—"For some years a clever phonographer, Mr William P. Stokes, who is also the local correspondent of the *London Times*, has served one of the principal managers of the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Railway Company in this capacity, [as shorthand amanuensis,] traveling with him along the line, and taking down from dictation answers to the Company's numerous correspondents, reporting the meetings of the Board of Directors, and proprietors, etc, and thus bearing silent and effective testimony to the superiority of Phonography."—*Mr H. Pitman, Manchester, in the "Phonetic Journal," 26 Oct., 1856.*

"I hold a situation in a large commercial establishment, the business of which, being carried on mainly by correspondence, that department of counting-house labor is unusually heavy. The nature of it is such, that it must originate with the Principal: but to occupy his time in writing letters, would be impracticable. His plan, therefore, is, to dictate rapidly the letters required, while I take them down in Phonography. When he has finished, I may write out and prepare the correspondence for mailing, while he is at liberty to attend to the higher duties of the business,—effecting a saving of time and labor which is of incalculable importance."—*Randolph Sailer, in the Counting-House of Powers and Weightman, Philadelphia.*

"I am about to leave my present situation for a much better one, for which you will be glad to learn I am indebted to Phonography. I shall be employed as shorthand clerk in the office of a firm of solicitors where there are two shorthand writers kept."—*C. F. Pearson in the "Phonetic Journal," 28 March, 1857.*

Phonography and the Pulpit.—"I can now write a sermon in half the time, on much less paper, and with far greater ease and pleasure than before I began to learn Phonography."—*P. A. L in the "Phonetic Journal," 10 Oct., 1857.*

"I acquired a knowledge of this art some five years ago from Mr Dyer. Since that time, I have been using it almost every day, and my sermons are written *exclusively* in Phonography. I have no more trouble in reading what I have written in that hand, than I have in reading the one which I am now employing—perhaps not so much. I can take up any of my phonographic manuscripts, written a year ago, and read them without a pause.

"Pamphlets and sermons in Phonography have been set up by compositors in the printing office, and by persons who were but partially acquainted with the art. Sermons have been printed that were written in Phonography, with no expectation of their ever meeting the public eye; and I have invariably found fewer mistakes in the proof, where the matter was set up from Phonography, than when written in longhand."—*Rev. J. T. Cooper, D.D., Philadelphia.*

“ I can write in four hours a discourse that would otherwise occupy the whole working day ; and I can then read and memorize it in less time, and with far more ease, than if it were written in the ordinary way. I love it for its beauty, its philosophy, and its eminent practical utility. It has given me a clearer insight into the structure of the English language, and made me more exact in my pronunciation.”

—*Rev. T. H. Beveridge, Philadelphia.*

Phonography and Book-keeping.—“ The accounts of the Phonetic Institution, those of the Phonetic Printing Office, and the Phonetic Depôt, are all kept in phonetic shorthand, and no inconvenience of any kind is experienced from these circumstances ; on the contrary, there is great saving of labor and space.”—*Note in Mr Ellis's "Plea for Phonetic Spelling, or the Necessity of Orthographic Reform."*

Phonography and Reporting.—“ I attend this session, for the first time, the Law Classes at the University here [Edinburgh]. I constantly employ Phonography in taking notes, and find it very useful. In Glasgow University, where I was last year, a great many of the students appeared to take notes of the lectures in Phonetic Shorthand.”—*David Forrest, Edinburgh, in the "Phonetic Journal."*

“ Our fine new Free Trade Hall [in Manchester] was opened this week. The staff of phonographic reporters which mustered from the different local papers, would have been a cheering sight to you. By a proper division of labor, and with so admirable a means of reporting the speeches, the proceedings of the opening meeting were in the hands of the compositors almost as soon as the meeting terminated, and the reporters returned to enjoy the festivities of the ball.”—*Mr H. Pitman of the "Manchester Courier," in the "Phonetic Journal," 25 Oct., 1856.*

The reporters on the Manchester newspapers are all Phonographers ; there being four on the *Guardian*, three on the *Examiner and Times*, one on the *Courier*, one on the *Spectator*, and one on the *Advertiser*,—as we learn from a subsequent communication in the same periodical.

Phonography and Compositors.—“ I have no hesitation in saying, that, in my judgment, the acquisition of Phonography as well by compositors as reporters, would materially add to the value of their services ; and greatly facilitate the operations of publishers.”—*Robert Morris, of the "Philadelphia Inquirer."*

“ I have been setting type from Phonographic manuscript for about fifteen months. I studied Phonography about one hour a day for two or three months, before I commenced the use of it as a compositor. I greatly prefer it to longhand. It is more pleasant to the eye, and less liable to be misunderstood ; and I find myself not more subject to mistakes in orthography.”—*James M. Ferguson, now Editor of the "Westminster Herald," Wilmington.*

At the Editorial Convention, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, it was re-

solved: That this Convention recommend to all persons who are learning, or who design to learn, the printing business, a thorough practical knowledge of Phonography; and that it urges upon all young men who are fitting themselves to become reporters, or to be otherwise engaged in the editorial department of newspapers, the necessity of the same knowledge.—*Phonetic Journal*.

26. *Concluding Words, etc.*—Our purpose in treating of Phonography is eminently *practical* in character. With the confidence of one who has himself enjoyed the advantages of the system, from the earliest date of its invention, we would earnestly recommend its acquirement by all who feel themselves equal to so simple an undertaking,—that is, who are not past what may be termed the *learning* period of life. Are you a young man? Learn phonography. A young lady, perhaps? Learn phonography. A student? Learn phonography. A clerk in a business-house or solicitor's office? Learn Phonography. A minister, perhaps? Learn phonography. An Author? Learn phonography. Or, a newspaper editor? Learn phonography. It matters not *what* may be your calling in life, if only you have use at all for writing, we would urge upon you the acquirement of *that* writing, which will save to you time and labor, and multiply your power of usefulness. Procure some one of the several text-books of Phonography that are published; *begin* and *keep on*. Devote to the practice one hour each day for a few weeks, and you will then be able to appreciate the value of Phonography, and of the recommendation here given you. It behoves you to consider whether you can afford to be behind the age for want of a few hours' application. What others are everywhere acquiring, will serve *your* purposes, perchance, as well as theirs.

Such is the advice we would tender to individuals. A word now to heads of firms, public companies, and schools:—

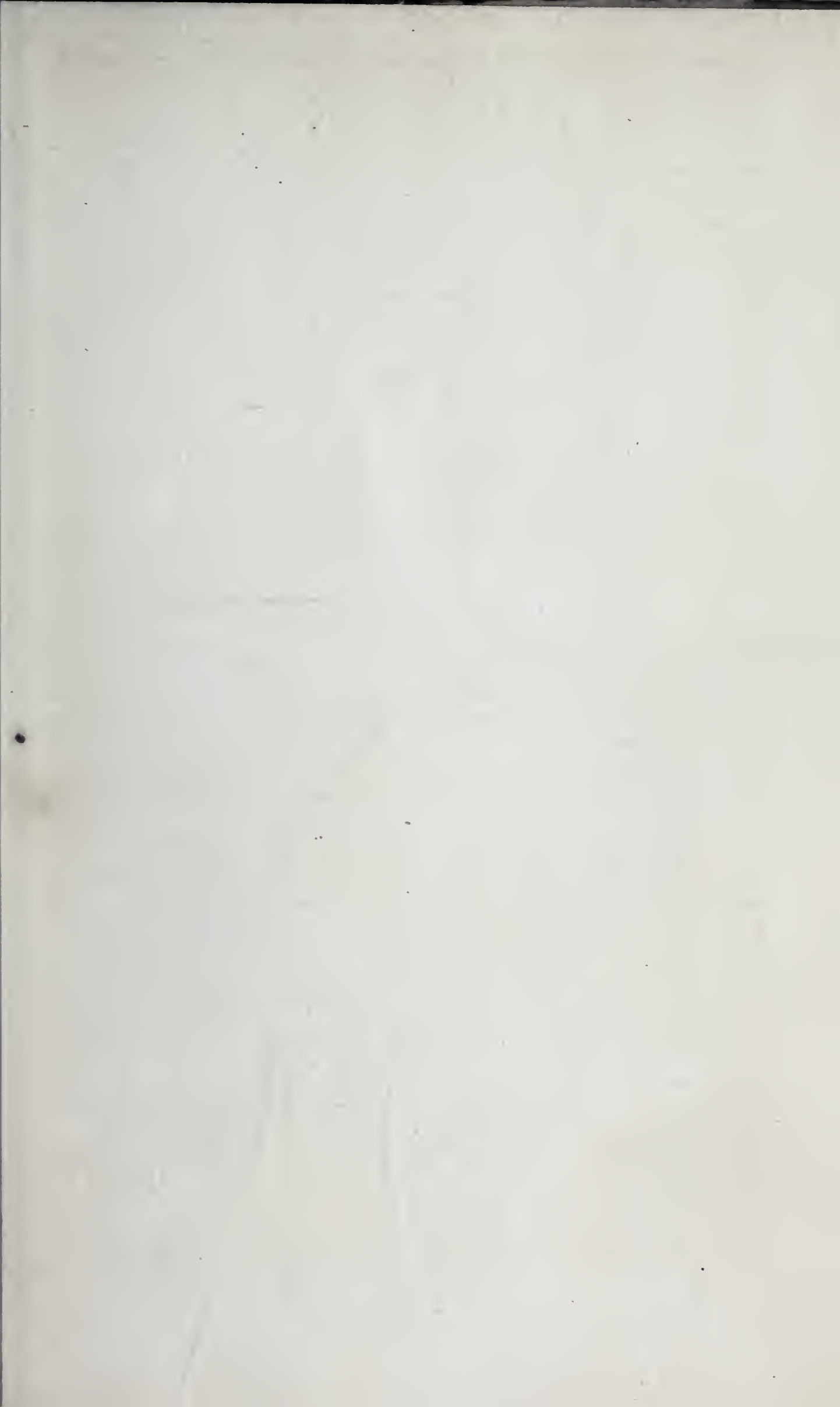
It would be worth the while for large mercantile firms and public establishments to *require* their clerks to acquaint themselves with Phonography, so as to be able to write quickly from dictation, or rapidly transcribe letters or documents of which copies must be taken. We have an indication that such a requirement will be needed in the not distant future, in the following remarks recently made in a municipal address by Mr Robert Gladstone, at Liverpool:—

“Among the many and extraordinary changes that are taking place there is none more so than the wonderful and extraordinary frequency of communication with distant parts of the world. Those who, like myself, are engaged in trade, and have letters to write, have frequently found themselves placed in a position which one might liken to a race between an old stage-coach and a locomotive on a railway. Not long ago we had a mail a month on hand to India—now we have one a week; and when I sit down to write long letters, which either I or my partners must do, I find the labor almost too much, and am soon ‘pumped out.’ Now, I want those who are instructing their children to teach them to

write what those gentlemen below me perform in such an admirable manner,—I mean shorthand writing. If my clerks, and they are very excellent and accomplished gentlemen,—but if they understood the art of shorthand writing, their services would be more valuable, because I could then dictate my letters to them, and have them all transcribed with correctness and dispatch, and with little toil. In fact, I don't see in what other way mercantile communication can be sustained with establishments abroad unless some such means are employed. And I think it would be a very fair matter for our corporation to consider in regard to these schools. When I saw a boy with talents sufficient to justify it, I would give him the opportunity of learning that art, so that he might rise if he had the opportunity.”—The hint contained in the above should be taken both by employers and employees,—and especially by the *latter*, before a younger class grows up to bid for their situations.

Again: It would be worth while for the proprietors of a newspaper to require their editors, reporters, and compositors uniformly to attain phonography. Much time, and fatiguing labor would by this means be saved to both editors and reporters, and much loss of time obviated in getting reports of public proceedings into type,—an advantage which would be especially great in the case of meetings where the addresses delivered are important, and the proceedings protracted often to a late hour. There are hundreds of compositors distributed throughout the country who can “set” type quickly from phonographic copy; so that a reporter would simply require to transcribe his notes into plainly written phonography, instead of into longhand. In individual cases this has been done; but it has yet to be carried out in a thorough and systematic manner in the every-day business of the newspaper office. We commend the consideration of this subject to newspaper proprietors.

Finally. Seeing that there is great probability of phonography being ultimately more or less in requisition in business, it is worth the consideration of principals of schools that they should require as a qualification in their assistants the ability to teach phonography in a practical manner. Phonography has been introduced into many schools already with some success, incidentally. It is however necessary that it should form part of the regular business of the school, for it to receive that thorough attention by which alone proficient writers can be ensured. *Day by day* practice,—this is the way to make our youth practical phonographers. In our commercial schools, especially, we would urge the continuous daily teaching of phonography, which, we prophesy, will soon be regarded by parents even with more approving interest than a knowledge of languages, and other accomplishments which may or may not prove of utility in practical business life. G. W.



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The books recommended to the student on commencing the study of Phonetic Shorthand, are the Phonographic Teacher and Copy Book.

See Pitman's Complete Catalogue of Phonetic Publications.

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